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V E N I Z E L O S

'Glorious Greece'—CHURCHILL



VENIZELOS IN HIS STUDY

VENIZELOS

Patriot ★ Statesman ★ Revolutionary

by DOROS ALASTOS

1942

PERCY LUND HUMPHRIES & CO. LTD. 12 BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON W.C.1

By the same author:
“**BALKANS AND EUROPE**”

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
LUND HUMPHRIES
LONDON • BRADFORD

D E D I C A T I O N

THIS book about Venizelos, great Greek liberator, I dedicate to the anonymous heroes, sons of Greece—heirs to those who throughout the ages fought and died for liberty and human progress—who to-day defying torture and death fight for the freedom of Greece.

P R E F A C E

six years have passed since Eleutherios Venizelos died—six years during which the map of Europe has changed beyond recognition and eleven nations have lost their independence. Yet to-day Venizelos is still a power in Greece. His followers and supporters, united with the other parties of the nation, are carrying on his work, *i.e.*, the war for national liberation. It is the secret, implacable, but none the less effective war of the guerrilla and the saboteur.

Venizelos the man, and Venizelos the politician, cannot be understood apart from Greece. He had no other life than the one which he dedicated to the service of the Greek nation. To understand him it is necessary to understand Greece, its people and its politics; to sense the driving power of Greek history and feel the intense individualism of the Greeks.

It is this twin aspect that I strove to present: the story of the life of Venizelos himself and at the same time, a study of Greek affairs during the past forty years.

I believe that as a result of the present global conflict, greater unity and understanding will develop among all the allied peoples—probably among all peoples. Consequently, any effort to interpret the allies to one another might be of some benefit in producing future harmony. The difficulties and misunderstandings which prevented the victors of the last war from building a workable and durable structure of peace, must not be allowed to nullify once more the sacrifices of the present world conflict.

Venizelos is not unknown to the British public. Many a time he found solace and refuge on British soil. Many a time he came here to negotiate for, or present and argue the case for, Greece. His great services to the allied cause in the last war won for him many friends and admirers. It is perhaps best that he is no longer alive to witness the present destruction of the State that he liberated and built up, and to see the cruel holocaust of his people at the hands of the Axis conquerors, though he would undoubtedly have rejoiced at the victories of the Greek army in Albania and their fight in Macedonia, which were but the

continuation of the same proud national revival which he fostered and which won the victories of 1912-13, 1918, and 1920.

For over a year Greece has been under the Axis, beaten down after a six months' defence that has become epic. It has been a year of agony and hunger, but a year in which the Greek people have steadily regrouped their forces and begun to strike back against the invader. Across their ex-frontiers, Draja Michailovich has almost an army under his control, hanging like a Damoclean sword over the forces of domination. And in Greece itself, there is now a considerable force operating from the mountains or in the cities, and striking blows against the enemy. The Balkan Peninsula is becoming a vast guerrilla camp. It has raised the banner of revolt.

Venizelos's followers are in the forefront of the Greek struggle. His old friend and collaborator, General Mandakas, is the leader of an army of revolutionaries in Crete. In Macedonia, Epirus, Attica, and Morea, they are playing an honoured part in the national front of resistance.

The wound of division under the impact of defeat has been healed. The Greek patriot forces are now united, and the democratic spirit that permeates the Government of M. Tsouderos—as embodied in his historic declaration to the Greek people in February—gave new hope, new energy to the people, and cemented Greek unity.

To the Germans and Italians the Greeks are an unwanted people. They have no industry to speak of, and their land does not produce a lot to swell the Nazi larder. They have perpetrated the unforgivable crime of resisting aggression, and must suffer. A policy of hunger, tantamount to one of extermination, has been enforced upon the Greek people. Tens of thousands have perished; children are dying by the thousand. Municipal carts are collecting the bodies of the victims of famine from the streets of the cities every morning. A whole generation of Greeks is threatened with extinction. The Government of M. Tsouderos, with the consent of the British Government, is doing its best to send food. Some ship-loads have already been sent, but unless something is done on a big scale, it is not improbable that when

victory comes, half the Greek nation will not be there to rejoice.

The ghastly tragedy that is being enacted on Greek soil is only relieved by the natural dignity and fortitude of the people. In their victory they were modest, in their disaster they remained proud and defiant. They did not complain when they had to fight the united forces of Axis barbarism. They do not complain now, but amidst their sufferings hit back and hate. The rebirth of Hellas is a certainty. The nation that from the days of Marathon down to the days of Albania, the nation that from Pericles down to Venizelos has been fighting the battle of freedom, is confident of its future. It cannot acquiesce in foreign tyranny and it cannot die. It strives instead to hasten the hour of victory and liberty.

* * *

This book is an attempt to present to the public the spirit of Hellas and its leading embodiment, Venizelos. It is at times harsh on individuals and parties, but it deals with harsh times.

In the preparation of this book I had the assistance of many friends of Venizelos in Paris and Athens. To them, wherever they may be at the present, I wish to express my thanks. In particular, I want to thank H. E. D. Caclamanos, ex-Greek Minister to the Court of St. James, an old and trusted friend of Venizelos, and a fervent advocate of the Greek cause, who has helped me enormously with material and information, and who looked through and, in some particulars, rectified errors in the MS.

D.A.

May 1942.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
FRONTISPICE		v
DEDICATION		vii
PREFACE		
PART I		
CHAPTER I.	(i) The man and his epoch	1
	(ii) The boyhood and early manhood of Venizelos	7
CHAPTER II.	Active politics—A professional revolution- ary	19
CHAPTER III.	Venizelos's triumph over the High Commissioner	44
PART II		
CHAPTER IV.	His first Premiership	67
CHAPTER V.	The plot succeeds—The Balkan Alli- ance	91
CHAPTER VI.	Friends fall out	115
CHAPTER VII.	"Lull before the storm"	128
PART III		
CHAPTER VIII.	Greece and the Great War	140
CHAPTER IX.	Venizelos's third revolution	170
CHAPTER X.	Victory and . . . defeat	187
CHAPTER XI.	The Anatolian tragedy	206
CHAPTER XII.	Salving the wreckage	222
PART IV		
CHAPTER XIII.	Peace and friendship	239
CHAPTER XIV.	The End	263
APPENDIX	275
BIBLIOGRAPHY	299
INDEX	301
MAPS	(i) Map of Greece (ii) Map of Territorial Development of Greece	<i>facing</i> 1 <i>facing</i> 230

MAP OF GREECE



100 ENGLISH MILES



FRONTIERS

MAP BY GORDON ANDSON & SONS LTD. 1932

PART I

*

CHAPTER I

(i) THE MAN AND HIS EPOCH

"Principles alone are constructive. Ideals are never translated into facts without the general recognition of some strong belief. Great things are never done except by the rejection of individualism and a constant sacrifice of self to the common progress."—*Mazzini*.

"However the Greek race might have altered in blood and quality their characteristics were found unchanged since the days of Alcibiades. As of old they preferred faction above all other interests and as of old in their crisis they had at their head one of the greatest of men."—*Winston Churchill*.

VENIZELOS achieved wider fame throughout the world than any Greek for many, many years. Greece herself he led and inspired for almost a quarter of a century. Europe knew him as a brilliant statesman and successful diplomat. But while Europe rendered him undivided homage, at home he was both praised and condemned, both denounced and upheld.

To the Western European world Venizelos appeared like a comet in the Greek political firmament. After he defied Turkey and the Great Powers in Crete towards the close of the nineteenth century his career was followed sympathetically and with interest. He would rise to view for a moment on the crest of some dramatic achievement and disappear again in the dull backwash of local politics. His struggles against Prince George for Cretan independence brought him into prominence: he was then the anti-dynastic rebel. He emerged later as the saviour of the monarchy and the leading inspiration of the Greek national *risorgimento*. He was at once the architect of the Balkan Alliance and the chief agent of its destruction.

During the Great War his efforts to bring Greece in on the side of the Allies were warmly welcomed and supported in the West.

He went on to banish the king and launch Greece on the sea of civil strife.

He achieved the triumph of his career by winning for Greece the boundaries he had dreamt of, and then lost everything in an astounding general election. He saw the fabric of the new Mediterranean state he had helped to create destroyed by the Turkish nationalism he had indirectly fostered. He reappeared again to sign a treaty which helped to preserve Greek independence and then retired from politics for ever—as he said: only to stage a triumphant come-back four years later. He succeeded in creating friendship with Turkey and thus establishing peace between two nations after the struggles of seven centuries. He was considered a spent force, on the verge of definite retirement, when he was chased by assassins and his car was riddled with bullets in a main road in Athens. At the age of seventy he started a revolution against a constitutionally elected Government, failed, and fled to exile. He was sentenced to death in his absence. In exile he urged his followers to accept the restored king, and thus bowed to the monarchy which he had fought for twelve years. When he had been granted an amnesty and was ready to return to Greece he died, and a year after being sentenced to death was accorded an impressive state funeral.

Such, in brief, were the kaleidoscopic impressions on the western world of the man who shaped Greek policy for twenty-five years.

To the Greeks, however, Venizelos appeared in a more equivocal light: either he was the greatest man Greece had produced since antiquity, a great political genius, raised to the pedestal of a national symbol, or an unscrupulous politician, a tyrant, who by intrigue and chicanery assumed control of Greece and destroyed everything. In fact, Greeks were either Venzelists or anti-Venzelists. The two different views were not founded on any appreciable difference of political or philosophical outlook. They were simply two positions taken up with regard to the person of M. Venizelos. They represent almost instinctive reactions to a picturesque personality. The Venzelists could only justify their attitude by pointing to the genius of Venizelos. The anti-Venzelists—except those who based their views on historical

and economic considerations—were in the same plight, defending their attitude by their detestation of the person of Venizelos.

Few men in contemporary history have excited so much admiration and hate at the same time, and no statesman has experienced such spectacular vicissitudes as Venizelos. As Aldous Huxley says about Clemenceau, one may not entirely approve of Venizelos as a politician; one may even question his principles and detest the methods of his statecraft, but it is impossible for anyone not to pay homage to the man, for after all there is nothing more admirable than the powers of genius in an individual, the springing native powers of the dæmonic energy of life. These powers Venizelos possessed to a superlative degree. What use he made of them we shall see in the course of this narrative.

To the politician he was inscrutable, to the general public incomprehensible. His attributes were distinguished by the lack of any coherent philosophy governing his activities. With all his advances, retreats and pauses, nobody could confidently claim to understand his personality. No enduring principle guided his steps. In its place there was a dream—the dream of raising the obscure Greek kingdom of the nineteenth century to the grandeur of the Byzantine Empire.

In this respect Venizelos was a romantic, the last romantic politician of Europe. His political discourses were flavoured with that all-embracing conception of his aims: a fatal mistake for a politician, but also a mighty fountain-spring of action. His realism, so much esteemed in the chancelleries of Europe, was only his ability to adapt the circumstances of the moment to the furtherance of his constant purpose. To that extent, and for that reason, he proved superior to many that he came in contact with in the councils of Europe. His demands were always made to further his plans, and so were specific, and were always supported by overwhelming dissertations on the “moral” and “eternal” rights of the Greek Christian peoples to form a new brotherhood under Greek sovereignty. In that respect Venizelos appeared as the man who knew his mind, unlike other statesmen, who had to labour to find a moral formula to justify their demands. What proved deficient, however, were the ultimate purposes of Venizelos’s aims. There was no substance there—

only illusions born of the wrong reading of history, which cost the Greek people dearly.

Born in 1864 and dying in 1936, his life covered the most decisive phase of European history. His active life stretched over the first thirty-five stormy years of the twentieth century. Changes were frequent and terrific. Venizelos could grasp them but he rarely turned them to any real lasting advantage. His reactions to them were instantaneous and empirical. Although he followed accurately every changing shade in the field of world politics, his own contributions were governed by his immediate personal reactions. He achieved brilliant successes both in internal affairs and in international policy, but, by an ironic antithesis, his failures in both fields were equally conspicuous.

He was admittedly a born leader of men and a man of action, a shrewd diplomat and clever politician; but the quaint old-fashioned cast of his patriotism and the objectivity of his ambition led him into grave reverses. He leapt without looking: he took steps in the dark. The long range of his vision was like that of the mystic dreamer rather than of the astute politician that controlled Greece. "Boundless faith in the vitality of the nation does not lead to failure. Nor does a Pyrrhic outlook bring about great deeds. Faith with folded arms and indifferent to what is going on around us is a fruitless faith, but faith accompanied by ceaseless endeavours in preparing the country for all eventualities, for facing to-morrow and not merely for patching the shortcomings of to-day, this faith is the creator of mighty things, the faith which has done much that is great and admirable in the world." (Venizelos speaking in Parliament, September 21, 1915.) Faith of this kind permeated his whole being—a faith in the ultimate greatness of the Greeks as a nation. In speaking of facing to-morrow he alludes to the coming conflict between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, which for Venizelos was the central point of his career. When this struggle took place, however, his grasp of practical affairs proved thoroughly inferior to the mystical fabric of his wishes, and the result was not so much his as the Greek nation's calamity.

Very few of his schemes withstood successfully the onslaught of

time. The Balkan League (which he thought might be changed eventually into a permanent Confederation), because of the many loopholes which all the participants, mistrusting each other, were subtle enough to incorporate into the original agreement, was destroyed in the fire of the Balkan war. His insistence on Greek participation on the side of the Allies led to Greece being towed by the barque of British Imperial policy. His zeal for the occupation of Asia Minor resulted in the ashes of Smyrna. His triumph of the Treaty of Sèvres was followed by the humiliation of the more practical Treaty of Lausanne. His promises in his last administration to alleviate the working and peasant classes of Greece and to compensate refugees proved sources of corruption and scandal, and led to the greater burdens which he imposed on the taxpayers. It is not wise to plead for extenuation by accepting unreservedly the formula of unforeseen adversities and to brand the man as the sport and toy of circumstance. Undoubtedly there are many creditable achievements in the career which will be unfolded in the following pages. Only the professional iconoclast will fail to praise his work for Greco-Turkish *rapprochement*. That event expresses the political maturity of Venizelos and his tardy recognition of the importance of historical development. If he had done nothing else this isolated achievement would have been enough to secure his position in the pantheon of great statesmen. It was no slight task. The struggles and traditions of a thousand years were against it. So were religious bigotry, the fresh memory of ten years of slaughter, the recent catastrophe which strengthened the idea of nationalism, and, above all, the denunciation of that very dream which was the life-force of Venizelos.

Venizelos was the very embodiment of the Greek national idea. He differed from previous Greek statesmen in the extent to which he magnified the national idea and even tried to realise it. His striking ascendancy over Greek politics and the unparalleled hold he had over the minds of the Greek people is due solely to the fact that in him more than any other politician the Great Idea (*Megdile Idéa*) was manifest. It is not hard to trace the originators and the causes that gave rise to that ideology. After the occupation of Greece by the Turks and the annexation of Greece to the

Ottoman Empire, the national forces in their incessant struggles against the oppressor needed a philosophy to hold them together, an ideal to fight for. At first this ideal emerged in a greatly exaggerated form—a blend of nationalism and religious fanaticism. The fight was not only against the oppressing Turks, but against all Mohammedans and infidels. The object was not only to liberate Greece, but to drive the Turks out of every place where Christianity held sway back into the heart of Arabia, to Mecca and Medina where Mohammedanism originated.

In this form a national and religious doctrine under the name of the "Great Idea" was taught illegally in secret schools by zealous priests and monks prior to the war of independence. There was no clear distinction between the religious and the political fighter because their purposes were identical.

With the same intensity, but in a slightly different form, the "Great Idea" was taught in the schools of liberated Greece and advocated from the pulpits. Its original unpractical idealism was replaced by a more elaborate plan. Only the regions where the Greeks lived, namely the South of the Balkan Peninsula, including Monastir, Philipopolis, Thrace and Constantinople, and the whole of Asia Minor and Cyprus formed its objectives. Although the opposition to Mohammedanism never slackened, it was wisely considered that it could only be pursued by a united effort of all the Christian peoples.

In this ideology Venizelos was nurtured. Born under Ottoman rule, under which his father and forefathers had suffered, and a native of Crete, which was in a state of continuous rebellion, where uprising and suppression followed one another at regular intervals for two hundred years, he inherited all the enthusiasm for the cause. He brought to the fight an extraordinary intelligence and a tireless energy which helped not only to maintain the struggle in existence, but also to achieve for the idea some form of success. His whole active pre-war life was a vindication of that aim and an attempt to keep it burning ever more fiercely in the heart of the Greek nation. The ideological preparations were gradually followed, through an elaborate maze of conflicts and of opportunities turned to advantage, by realisation. Step by step the boundaries of Greece were extended, the Greek people

were liberated, but still there was no satisfaction for the yearnings of four centuries of persistent tuition. Every ideal whose *raison d'être* is simply to serve as a star of hope in the welter of confusing realities and takes no heed of facts, is bound to fail. So it happened with the Greek national dream and with Venizelos. Once the noble idea approached realisation it turned from liberating into an imperialist adventure for the subjection of other peoples. Its whole moral basis ceased to exist. The edifice of righteousness cracked and justice gave way to inequity. And so it failed.

Venizelos survived to see the outcome of the rash political ideology of his youth. In his last days he must undoubtedly have repented for not trying early in life to set down his aims, at least on paper, and so become convinced of their impracticability. He was responsible for the most decisive and tragic turn in the realisation of the Hellenic Ideal, but he was also the first to accept its overthrow.

(ii) BOYHOOD AND EARLY MANHOOD

NOT far from Canea is the village of Mournies. Built among olive groves and vineyards, with beautiful terraced gardens and fruit trees, it was at one time the favoured summer resort of the wealthy people of Canea. A few miles to the north lies the sea, while to the south the pine-clad hills are crowned by the majestic White Mountains range that stretches across the island. Far to the east, through the haze of the brilliant sunshine, the snow-covered peak of Psiloriti—the ancient Ida of Europa fame—is silhouetted against the horizon.

In this village, where his family were on holiday, Venizelos was born on August 11, 1864.

His father, though very young at the time, had fought in the Greek war of independence, and had been decorated for his bravery. Three of his brothers had fallen in the struggle for Cretan independence, while a fourth, Hadji Nicolas Venizelos, maintained liaison between the leaders of the Greek revolution and the local insurgents. In 1843 the Turkish Government banished the elder Venizelos for his political activities and confiscated all his property. He remained in exile for nineteen

years and returned to Canea in 1862. He was again proscribed after the revolution of 1866, but was ultimately allowed to return and settle in Canea in 1874. During the period of his second exile Kyriakos Venizelos acquired Greek nationality.

The political activities of Kyriakos Venizelos were both revolutionary and conciliatory. He was looked upon as a nationalist leader by the Greeks, while the Turks relied upon him to restrain the revolutionaries. By profession he was a merchant, and possessed considerable business talent. Although his early revolutionary fight against the Ottoman Empire might have been the inevitable outcome of the nationalist fervour of the times, the accusations which led to his second banishment were purely imaginary. His position as a wealthy man, wielding considerable authority locally, was sufficient reason to render him suspect to the incompetent Ottoman officials. There is no proof that he participated in any way in the revolution of 1866.

The extraordinary talents of Eleutherios Venizelos must be studied against this background of revolution and commercialism. His dual inheritance is manifest throughout his career. Intransigence and capitulation, opposition and negotiation, political realism and incurable idealism, are the two complementary aspects of his personality.

At times he is the business man, laying down plans which are framed and given effect with slap-dash improvidence, negotiating treaties as if he were bargaining in a market, dealing with urgent matters of state with the overpowering charm of manner of an expert salesman, developing his ideas in a conundrum of theories, hawking ingenious but plausible nostrums for the nation's ills. At times the idealist revolutionary, extending the boundaries of an illusory heritage, ready to tackle every issue without due care and planning, vindictive, not because of political expediency, but on account of an underlying faith, easily led by sympathy into justifying unjustifiable acts, possessing all the qualities of leadership except the ability to pick as his colleagues men of requisite calibre, seeing the future but oblivious of the present: in short, a man armed with virtues and hampered by defects whose outcome was in essence the conflict and drama which distinguished his personality.

Venizelos was one of six children. He was the fourth child, and as the three previous had died in infancy, great anxiety was felt for him. He was baptised in a small church called St. Eleutherios, and the priest, in giving him the name Eleutherios (in Greek the equivalent of *Liberator*), added "the one who will liberate Crete."

After they were banished in 1866, the family went for a few years to Cythera, and thence to Syra, where Venizelos learned his first letters. On their return to Canea he completed his elementary schooling. His secondary studies were done in Canea, Athens and Syra, where he took his certificate at the age of sixteen.

After finishing his high school studies, Venizelos worked with his father, who intended him to be his successor in business. But the enforced routine of business life did not suit the turbulent character of young Eleutherios, who insisted that he wanted to study law. His father was against it, and pleaded that in declining to send him to the University he was doing so not because he was in need of his work, but in order to secure a better future for his son. The attitude of the elder Venizelos may have been dictated in part by his anxiety that his son should not mix in the turmoil of local politics.

So Eleutherios worked for his father until his ability attracted the attention of M. G. Zygomalas, the Greek Consul, who urged Venizelos *père* to send the youth to the University of Athens. The merchant yielded to the advice of his friend, and in September 1881 Venizelos was enrolled in the University of Athens.

In Athens, Venizelos devoted himself, not only to the study of law, but to several other subjects, and he there laid the foundations of that profound knowledge of the history and geography of the Near East, which proved of such decisive value in his later career. While in Athens, he helped to look after his father's business when his father died in 1883. In January 1887 he took the degree of LL.D.

During the examination Venizelos came into conflict with his professor, M. Krassas, over the interpretation of a clause of the Roman code. Venizelos insisted that the interpretation must be in accordance with modern conceptions, because the peculiarities which were inferred in its verbal explanation had ceased to exist

and accordingly its true rendering had become valueless under modern conditions. Another professor sitting near accepted the stipulation of Venizelos. This must have angered M. Krassas, who let loose a stream of legal eloquence in support of his own contention. To this Venizelos audaciously answered that if such a contingency arose and he took the attitude which his professor advocated, he was afraid lest the professor of penal law next to him, in exercising his duties as solicitor-general, would have called him to order for infringing upon the stipulations of the penal law. The professor, in anger, declined to pass him.

The next day Venizelos wrote to his mother stating that she would be dissatisfied with the results of his examination, and added that even so "you will not cease to think that your son is worthy of a better future and that he possesses the qualities necessary for its achievement."¹

After the completion of his studies, Venizelos returned to Canea and for two years practised as a barrister. He attracted much attention. He thought of going to Germany to continue his studies, but was prevented from doing so by falling in love with a beautiful young girl, Maria Catelouzou, whom he married in 1890. The marriage took place during the latter part of the year, and, as a gesture of honour, the Consuls of Canea were present.

Venizelos's life cannot be understood apart from the struggles and strifes of Hellenism. In Athens he formed those wide views of the destiny of Greece to which he dedicated his life. He differed, however, from his predecessors as well as his political opponents of later years in that, while they contented themselves with a vague attachment to the cause of liberation, Venizelos made it essentially the aim of his life and subordinated all his political action to its service. He always worked in terms of the larger world of unredeemed Hellenism. His struggle was a noble fight for freedom. Before him was always the spectacle of a tyrannised people. The Greeks of Thessaly, Macedonia, Thrace, Crete, the Aegean Islands, Dodecanese and Western Asia Minor were groaning under the brutal autocracy of the Caliph. And in all these districts were the noble traditions of ceaseless revolt.

He grew up an unredeemed Greek, coming gradually to the

¹ Quoted by G. Papantonaki: *Political Career of Venizelos*, p. 8.

consciousness of the terrible humiliation of despotic alien rule. Though he could not remember it, being then only two years old, the tragic story of the Cretan insurrection of 1866 must have been inculcated into his mind. "The Porte," says W. Miller, "was then anxious to provoke an armed rising which would enable it to transfer the troublesome island to its vassal, the Khedive Ismail, to whose famous predecessor it had been subjected from 1832 to 1840; and this plan was not unpleasing to France, then extending her influence in Egypt by the construction of the Suez Canal. Egyptian troops were landed as in 1823, and Egyptian offers of a bank, schools and roads were made to the Cretans if they would consent to union with Egypt. Instead of accepting, a "General Assembly of the Cretans" held at Sphakia on September 2, declared Ottoman rule abolished and proclaimed Union with Greece. Already blood had begun to flow; an Egyptian defeat at the Springs of Apokorona led to the recall of Ismail and the appointment as Special Commissioner of Mustapha Pasha, a severe but just, if merciless, Albanian."¹

The causes of the insurrection were so deep-rooted and so widespread that soon the island, apart from the chief cities, was wrested from Turkish control. The superior forces of the Ottoman Empire, however, succeeded in overcoming the insurrectionary forces controlling the western part of the island. In the middle of the island the revolutionary forces held sway and established their headquarters at the monastery of Arcadiion, a strongly fortified building near Rhethymne.

"Against this sacred fortress Mustapha directed his attack, but its massive construction proved superior to the force of his mountain artillery, while within soldiers and monks with the cry of 'liberty and death' upon their lips defended the position for two whole days. 'Never in their recollection,' said the islanders, 'had such a battle been fought in Crete!' At last, on November 21, the Turks forced the iron gate; the Egyptians, pressed on by the bayonets of their comrades, effected an entrance into the courtyard; then Maneses the abbot put a match to the powder magazine, uniting defenders and assailants in one common

¹ Wm. Miller: *The Ottoman Empire and its Successors, 1801-1927*, pp. 309-310.

hetacomb. The survivors, who had surrendered their arms on a promise that their lives should be spared, were mostly massacred."¹ The revolution was eventually suppressed. The memory of this must have remained indelible in the mind of Venizelos who, almost seventy years later, used to attend, in his native land, the ceremony of the fall of Arcadiou. He came gradually to perceive that the Porte was perpetrating its outrages in Crete with the connivance and, in some cases, with the support of the Western Powers. The British Government were Turcophil. The French were courting the Caliph. International relations, and those mystic processes of diplomacy that work for the building up of alliances, blinded the Western Powers to the atrocities of their protégé.

There was also the economic problem. The Turks were the dominant race, contributing nothing to the community, but allocating to themselves privileges which were like crushing mill-stones, arresting the development of local commerce and trade. The peasants were ruined by taxation. It was characteristic of Ottoman rule that practically all its income for the maintenance of an imposing army and the upkeep of a dissolute phalanx of rulers was borne by the land. Agricultural development and commercial progress were obstructed by the archaic despotic regime of the Sublime Porte.

During the period of his early manhood Venizelos saw great changes in the Balkans. The Russo-Turkish war had considerably weakened the Ottoman Empire. The Tsar, on the contrary, under the Christian gown of liberator of the Slavic Balkan races, was pushing his influence and gradually his Empire to the Aegean. The Congress of Berlin was called to safeguard the system of Ottoman overlordship in the Near East. It pronounced harsh judgment on the short-lived Treaty of San Stefano and attempted to solve Balkan problems in accordance with the fears and ambitions of rival powers. Bulgaria's territorial expansion was limited. Montenegro was forced to give back to Turkey emancipated territories. Greek territory was extended by the acquisition of Thessaly. But Greek claims upon Epirus and Crete were denied.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

At the time of his university career, Venizelos was already in a position to follow the Balkanic situation in its baffling state of flux. The situation was changing out of all recognition. Old ideas had, therefore, to be discarded. New conceptions were needed to fit the facts. The Great Powers of the West were now definitely on the side of Turkey. Any change in the structure of the Ottoman Empire was viewed by them with undisguised alarm, while Tsarist Russia was jubilant. Bulgaria, by annexing Eastern Rumelia, had successfully defied the Great Powers and the Porte, and had shown that the Powers were not in a position to enforce the decrees of the Treaty of Berlin. Bulgarian aggrandisement led to Bulgarian nationalist aggressiveness in Macedonia and to the Serbo-Bulgarian war. Macedonia showed herself as the breeding-ground of future struggles.

These tragic developments among the newly liberated Balkan peoples turned Venizelos's nationalism to other fields of political thought. It was now not only Ottoman rule that they had to fight. It was also the question of combating the Slavic propaganda—particularly Bulgarian—in the unredeemed territories, to prevent the future absorption and assimilation of the Hellenic race by their Slav neighbours. He gradually came to realise that the Greek kingdom should be used as the means for liberating Salonika, Constantinople and Smyrna. The Greek Government might seek the friendship of the Power guarantors and mould her policy according to the wishes of the strong nations, but the Greek kingdom must also become the rallying point of all the Greeks still under Turkish rule. After the annexation of Eastern Rumelia by Prince Alexander of Battenberg, Prince of Bulgaria, in 1885, Venizelos invited his student friends to his study and outlined to them his own views of how the Greek nation ought to work for the realisation of its national ideals. On a map of the Justinian Empire hanging on the wall of his study, he drew the boundaries of the Greater Greece of his vision. His boundary line included Lake Ochrida, Monastir and its plain, Constantinople and Asia Minor¹ adding that Constantinople ought to become the political capital, while Athens remained the spiritual centre of the new Greek Empire.

¹ See G. Papantonaki: *Political Career of Venizelos*, p. 21.

Another noteworthy incident of the student days of Venizelos was his interview with Joseph Chamberlain in November 1886.

Joseph Chamberlain, passing through Athens on his return home from a journey to the East, gave an interview to the Athenian paper *Acropolis* in which he said, amongst other things, that a Greek highly placed in Constantinople told him that the Cretans demanded secession from Turkey, but were against union with Greece. This declaration created a sensation among the Cretans in Athens and particularly among the students, who, after consultation, appointed five members to demand an interview with the British statesman to put before him the case of Crete. Venizelos led the delegation.

Venizelos began the interview by expressing regret for the inaccurate and tendentious information given to Joseph Chamberlain as regards the sentiments of the Cretan people, and reiterated that their aim and purpose was ultimate union with Greece, to which the many uprisings had given ample testimony.

To a question by Joseph Chamberlain, whether the demand for union with Greece was the result of nationalist sentiment or of the oppression of the Ottoman rule, and what were the political institutions of the island, and how did they operate, Venizelos answered as follows:—

"Firstly, we want the union for both reasons. National feeling forces man to struggle incessantly for the achievement of his political freedom, the only means by which he can achieve a civilised state. But independent of that high ideal, our very interests demand union with Greece. Our position is not so rosy as it is considered in Europe. The excesses of Turkish administration have not ceased, but indeed continue more systematically, under the guise of legality. As for the second question, this is the position. The present constitution was granted as a result of the revolution of 1866, which lasted for three years, but was never applied till 1878, when another revolution necessitated its enforcement. According to this constitution, better known as the Pact of Halepa, the jurisdiction of the Cretan Assembly was recognised by the Porte and it was also given legislative powers. Outwardly it appears to be a liberal constitution."

"What then are your complaints against the Constitution?"

"Our complaints are twofold. Firstly, they emanate from its very imperfection. Secondly, from the fact that the Turkish Government has been violating it. The Sultan, for example, has the power to veto the decisions of the Assembly. Only a part of the laws are approved. The majority are rejected without even a technical legal excuse. And even those laws which are approved, are only approved after they are arbitrarily modified by the Sultan. Thus the Sultan substitutes his own will for that of the Assembly and imposes laws on the island which its constitutionally elected assembly did not enact."

"Can you give me any example of that?" asked Chamberlain.

"Plenty. The principal subject is the question of religious toleration, which was embodied in the Hatti-Humayun of 1856. But even this, a specific clause of the Ottoman Constitution, was never respected. Although we have the right of religious toleration by the privileges afforded us by the law of 1866 and the Pact of Halepa of 1878, those privileges are never respected. If it happens—though very rarely—that a Christian should adopt Mohammedanism, then the laws are valid and the Islamised Christian maintains his political and civil rights intact. If, on the other hand—which is more common—a Mohammedan adopts Christianity as his religion, he loses, apart from everything else, all family rights and rights of succession and inheritance, not to mention the official persecution to which he will be subjected. According to existing laws, personal liberty is safeguarded and no one can be arrested without a warrant. But quite recently about twenty Greeks, on their way to Crete, were placed under arrest and put in prison for twenty days without trial, and without any reason whatsoever. . . . According to Article 11 of the Pact of Halepa we are given freedom of the Press. But the Damoclean sword is hanging over the heads of the unfortunate journalists, who are lucky to escape with many months' imprisonment if they dare criticise the Porte. Not long ago the editor of a Greek paper in Canea was arrested for an anti-Ottoman article and the authorities, through the public prosecutor, demanded the enforcement of an article of the penal code imposing death sentence. He escaped death, but was sentenced instead to a long term of imprisonment."

To a further question about taxation Venizelos answered: "The taxes are approved by the Assembly. According to the Pact of Halepa all taxation, except tobacco duty, duty on salt, and import duties, goes to the local Exchequer. The Ottoman Government is also appropriating the stamp duty, amounting approximately to 207,000 francs annually, which, according to the Pact, belongs to the island. Also many other discrepancies are taking place. According to the Pact, in the event of a surplus in the local budget, the Imperial Government has the right to half that amount, and in the event of a deficit has to reimburse the necessary amount from the customs duties to cover it. But the Turkish Government adapts instead the yearly budget to the Procrustean bed of its own motives, cutting down expenditure on works of public utility, on construction of roads and harbours and the development of education. All this in order that the Imperial Government should increase its lion's share when there is a surplus, and restrict possible deficits as much as possible. Other abuses are also taking place. For instance, last year the budgetary deficit amounted to 45 per cent. The Porte is responsible for its cover, to the extent of handing over up to half the total proceeds of import duties. But to lessen the amount of its responsibility, the Imperial Government has forged the account of the import duties, which she represented for the last consecutive seven years, as amounting to the round figure of 600,000 francs, as if it were possible that there should be no difference, even of a few francs from year to year, while commerce was by no means static. [Half the amount, *i.e.*, 300,000 francs could not cover the 45 per cent. deficit of the budget.—D. A.] This kind of forging is beyond public control, because the administration of customs rests entirely with the Ottoman Government. Such being the conditions, the economic situation of the island has been steadily worsening.

"A rectification of this iniquity was proposed by the Assembly as follows: Either the existing kind of bureaucracy should be abolished (which, incidentally, according to law, places over every Greek civil servant a Turkish supervisor), or the Imperial Government should give to the island two-thirds of the import duties annually. The Porte rejected the proposals. She did not

even accept a third, and by far more reasonable, proposal, to hand the customs to the island, against an annual compensation of 600,000 francs, *i.e.*, as much as its present shown amount of revenue. That this suggestion should be rejected shows the bad faith of the Porte. Because of the rigid attitude of the Ottoman Government, the Assembly has not functioned smoothly during the last four years, and as there is no budget and no legislative council, the administrative machine does not operate properly."

To a further question of Joseph Chamberlain whether it was true that he heard that the Cretan Assembly had voted for the union of Crete with Greece, Venizelos answered:

"Your information is correct. This year, again, the Cretan Assembly voted once more for union."

"How is it that the European Powers learn nothing of these things?" inquired Chamberlain.

"It is because the representatives of the Powers in Canea have steadily refused to accept any document from the Cretan Assembly, or from any other representative local institution. But we never fail to give publicity to our demands in the Press."

"I cannot understand," said Chamberlain, "why the Turkish Government demands the head of a journalist who is critical of the Turkish regime and does not take any drastic action against the Assembly."

"The Porte does not want to arouse the hostility of the people by adopting violent measures against the entire Greek representation of the island. Turkish Sovereignty is exercised in Crete only with the moral support of Europe. The Porte is aware of its impotence to impose her will on the Cretan people, and when she becomes brutal and repressive, she does so with the knowledge that the Cretans can do nothing against the will of Europe. In order to illustrate this, we mention the fact that while the Ottoman Government maintains a standing peace army in the island of 2,000 men (which she recently increased to 10,000), during the insurrection of 1866 she only succeeded in subjugating the island after 120,000 troops were landed, and, even so, the act of suppression took three years to accomplish. From this it may be understood that Turkish power is very weak in Crete. The fact that there is no revolution to-day is attributed to the widespread

belief that Europe would exercise repressive measures, as she did against Greece this year. [Referring to the naval blockade of 1886.] This, however, does not prevent us from being in permanent political revolution, as was very aptly put by one of your colleagues in the House of Commons."¹

We have quoted this interview almost in full for many reasons. It shows Venizelos at the age of twenty-three already armed with that wealth of detail about his native island which characterised his later discourses concerning the question of the Near East. It throws a ray of light on the topic of maladministration of Crete by the Ottoman Empire. It portrays Venizelos's greatest gift: lightning response and persuasiveness. There are no colourful words there, no flights into abstract principle, simply a prodigious knowledge of local affairs marshalled with legalistic soberness.

The impression which this interview made on Joseph Chamberlain must have been exceptionally great, for the next day when M. Renieris, Governor of the Bank of Greece and a native of Crete, called on him for the purpose of enlightening him on the Cretan problem, Chamberlain said:

"When you have men like those who visited me yesterday you must be under no illusion that your country will not be liberated from the Turks."

This is undoubtedly a warm tribute from one of the most prominent English politicians of the time, to the rising political genius of the young Venizelos. It turned the hostile and critical Chamberlain not to a supporter of the Cretan cause, but at least to a sympathetic witness of the struggles of the Cretan people. The last words of Venizelos, in which he castigated the moral corruption of Europe in its relation to Crete, must have pricked the consciousness of the listener whose lukewarm Liberalism was being replaced at the time by that of the Imperialist missionary.

¹ *Nea Efimeris*, November 5, 1886.

CHAPTER II

ACTIVE POLITICS—A PROFESSIONAL REVOLUTIONARY

WHEN the southern Greek provinces attained their liberation after ten years of merciless guerrilla warfare, Crete was not included in the liberated territory. Metternich was anxious not to weaken the Ottoman Empire. The Cretans endured the sufferings of the revolution, but were prevented by the strong hand of the Western Powers from reaping any of its rewards. But ten years of epic struggle could not be wiped out by a diplomatic act of Europe. The fight for freedom—political or economic—is not a modern sophisticated notion; it has its roots in ancient tradition and elemental feelings, and is based upon necessities stronger than the sedate calculations of European opportunism.

In 1840, when the Powers intervened to save the Ottoman Empire from Mohammed Ali's schemes of conquest, they declined once more to cede Crete to Greece. This failure was followed by an era of insurrections, hopeless, but insistent. Had the geological formation of the island been different, had it not been gifted with high mountains and natural fortresses, the entire population must have fallen victim to Constantinople's stupid vengeance.

The Cretan question reflects the diplomacy of the Powers in the nineteenth century at its worst. The very life and existence of the Cretan people were sacrificed on the altar of commercial and strategic interests and political rivalries. The two questions—the Cretan and Greek—became inseparable. Because of the Cretan insurrection, Greece was to incur expenses of three hundred million francs and fight a humiliating war with Turkey. Delegiannes, precursor of Venizelos, realised that union with Greece was the only solution of the Cretan question. At the Congress of Berlin he asked for Thessaly to assure Greece food, but he asked also for Crete to assure Greece peace.

In the Cretan general election of 1889, Venizelos contested the province of Kydonia for the Liberal Party and won the election.

The elections were fought with fury, and the Liberals were victorious. The atmosphere was one of intense personal bitterness, increased by the hatred of oppression. Not only were the two national elements of the island—Turks and Greeks—implacable enemies, but the Greek section was divided into various hostile factions, indulging in orgies of personal recrimination and animated by an incomprehensible intolerance of their political opponents.

Venizelos, with seven of his friends, formed the moderate wing of the Liberal Party. He saw that the cause of Cretan independence could not be served by a hostile and acrimonious Greek representation in the Assembly. The enemy was Ottoman Imperialism. Any one who by speech or action helped to prolong Ottoman occupation of the island was a traitor to his country's cause. In the paper which his group was issuing, he tried, with his articles, to influence the representatives and provide a means of common reconciliation. "Our country," he wrote, "is suffering financially, is suffering from the maladministration of justice, from the lack of public security; above all she is suffering morally. And while she is in such a critical condition, it is a folly for her sons, and particularly for her chosen sons, to be indifferent to this critical situation, to quarrel among themselves and try to destroy each other. We cannot believe that the representatives of the island will fail in the requirements of political conduct and we hurry to extend our hands to our political rivals, and ask them for their co-operation for the benefit of our country." Statesmanship was born in the island.

In the Assembly he pursued this policy of conciliation. One of his first actions was to defend the contested legality of the election of one of his opponents. His wit, his quick response, his humour and knowledge, marked him out for a quick ascendance. The majority strove to eliminate the influence of Venizelos and his colleagues from the Assembly. Their small number was the butt of carping criticism. "A party," declared Venizelos, "should be founded not merely on numbers, but on moral principles, without which it can neither accomplish useful work, nor inspire confidence."¹

¹ *Lefka Ore*, April 3, 1889.

On another occasion, when the question of the status of judges was under discussion, a representative suggested that the law should be maintained in its existing form, as it was of French origin.

"Of whatever noble origin this law might be, it is so bad that we had better do without it. It has fallen lower in the public opinion than any other law in Crete," Venizelos declared.

"According to your opinion," remarked another representative.

"Naturally," answered Venizelos. "When a speaker makes a statement, as long as he does not quote any authority, he is expressing his own views, and I have expressed mine, however small my 'authority' may be."

"Which will be strengthened with the passing of time," was the third remark.

"Yes," replied Venizelos, "I hope that I will progress correspondingly in age and knowledge. I confess this gladly because it constitutes the law of development and because, in my political associations, I am on the progressive side."¹

In spite of Venizelos's attempts to clean the Augean Stables of Cretan politics, the situation, instead of improving, became worse. The Turkish minority, encouraged by the Porte, adopted dilatory tactics, which were paralysing the normal working of the Constitution. The Greek majority was hopelessly divided, and ruled by unharnessed political passion. Constantinople looked on with undisguised pleasure. The situation was ripening for intervention, and Abdul Hamid, a cunning tyrant, acted promptly. He made some friendly overtures of a general character to the Western Powers, and immediately dispatched an army of forty thousand men to Crete, in August 1889. Corrupt and brutal as he was, he had enough political shrewdness to allay the fears of world opinion as to his intentions, and to fool the Governments of Europe. The army landed, but took no action; months passed by. Abdul was anxiously waiting lest public opinion would force the hand of the Chancelleries, and when he felt sure that his methods of delay had triumphed, he acted. Subtlety and craft triumphed over hypocrisy. On December 7, Abdul, through his Admiral Ratib Pasha, published and enforced a firman suspending

¹ *Ibid.*, April 10, 1889.

the Pact of Halepa and cancelling the concessions granted to the Cretans by Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin. Only then did the Powers make some representations at Constantinople.

The numbers of the Assembly and the proportion between Christian and Moslem were reduced by the new order. This action was strongly opposed by the majority of the inhabitants, and the opposition gradually developed into a revolution which was forcibly suppressed. The Greek Government was anxious to cultivate friendly relations with Turkey which, under the exigencies of the moment, provided the only guarantee of Greek territorial integrity in face of an antagonistic Western Europe. The Greek deputies of the Cretan Assembly were asked through the Greek Consul General to refrain from any action which might be prejudicial to Greece. Venizelos, an ardent admirer of the Greek Prime Minister, Charilaos Tricoupes, yielded to the demand of the "Mother Country" and threw in his lot on the side of moderation. Hence there emerged another division among the hopelessly divided Greek majority, and the result was failure!

It is characteristic of Venizelos, of his whole outlook and actions, that he was first and foremost a Greek. The Cretan struggle was for him only incidental; it could not evolve, nor follow the course of its natural volition, but must be directed, supported or restrained to suit the needs of the Greek kingdom.

The Turkish army made a clean sweep of the state, and assumed full power. Under its ægis neither the Greeks nor the Turks were satisfied. The abnormal political conditions were followed by commercial stagnation and economic sterility was soon paralysing the life of the country. Administration was becoming more costly while the revenue dwindled; political activity devolved into one of general passive resistance.

Eventually the Turkish Governor, incapable of undoing his own work, asked from the Porte to be recalled and suggested as a possible remedy the appointment of a Greek Christian Governor. Kara Theodory Pasha, an Ottoman Greek, was appointed in February 1895. His first act was to convoke the General Assembly with a proclamation which promised a liberal régime.

During this period Venizelos sustained a heavy blow by the

death of his wife. His first son—Kyriakos—had been born early in 1893. In bearing a second Madame Venizelos died in November 1894. Venizelos was inconsolable. For months he appeared to be a broken man, and only his keen sense of public duty saved him.

In the elections of 1895 he did not participate, feeling unequal to the arduous task. He devoted his time instead to political journalism. Unfortunately, the elections did not give rise to any form of political normality. By accepting representation in the Assembly, the Cretans condoned the action of the Sultan in repudiating the international status of the island laid down in Berlin. Armed revolutionaries held sway in the province of Apokorona under the leadership of M. Koundouros. They demanded autonomy for Crete under the protection of the Powers, and a memorandum to that effect was handed to the Consuls at Canea and to the Governor. The Porte refused to consider the demands of the rebels and proceeded to recall Kara Theodory Pasha, who was replaced by his predecessor.

The object of the revolutionaries was to force the powers to declare Crete autonomous. Their argument was strong and their policy sound. Why demand union with Greece? There were so many obstacles to overcome. Why not ask for autonomy, which would be followed inevitably by union? Autonomy would improve the finances of the island; many channels of trade would be opened to a semi-internationally controlled dependency, and the economic interests of the Cretans better served and safeguarded. Also a good number of the Greeks of the kingdom favoured autonomy, because the incessant propaganda and agitation of the annexationists threatened the internal political stability of the country.

What would be easier under the circumstances than to strengthen the fight for autonomy as a stepping-stone to independence and even to union? To this Venizelos objected. His mental fixity allowed no deviation. In his court cases he demonstrated extraordinary subtlety and mental agility. In politics he showed common sense, blended with a form of visionary rigidity. At every turn he would discover the ultimate aims of Hellenism to be served or opposed by the adoption of certain methods.

Rightly he came to be known among his political associates as a man of wide knowledge, but of enormous political impracticability. Single-mindedness and incapacity for seeing the other's point of view is sometimes a good asset in politics, but it often leads nowhere or to an impasse. Venizelos's attitude led somewhere, but whatever the results, and how great the achievements were, they have been the products of different circumstances, moulded in another pattern, and dealt with in a different way. They cannot exonerate either a policy or the political ideal underlying it, which characterised this part of his career.

What has to be understood in this connection is Venizelos's mental make-up. Ever since he became active in political life as a youth in Athens, he had thought and acted not as a Greek representing a section of the Greek people, but as a Hellen speaking and thinking of the wider issues of Hellenism. His ideas were not founded on any social or economic laws. And paradoxically enough, none of his political speeches are in existence to illustrate his outlook comprehensively.

Venizelos rejected all invitations to join the autonomists. Not only did he abstain from taking any part in the revolution, but risked his prestige and future leadership of the Cretan cause by declaring against it. He would fight, he said, for no other cause than that of union with Greece. But though he did not participate in the revolution, he carried on a relentless journalistic campaign against Turkey which led to the suspension of his paper *Argi* by order of the Governor.

The revolutionary committee was successful in its initial skirmishes with the Turkish armies. They besieged the Turkish garrison at Vamos, and held the invaders in check. Winter and forbidding mountains enabled them to hold out until the spring, when a new army, fresh from the massacre of the Armenians, was sent to Crete. The Turkish command avoided a straight fight. It adopted the method of first pacifying the rebellious districts, which was done with characteristic Ottoman thoroughness. In May 1896, following the exploits of the army in the provinces, the Turkish population, assisted by the military, attempted a general massacre of the Christian population.

Greece appealed to the Powers for intervention on behalf of the

Cretan people, making it plain that failure to do so would inevitably result in a Greco-Turkish war. The active volcano of Southern Europe was on the point of eruption. Once in action, how long it would last and how far it would go, nobody could tell. So the Powers were forced to make representations to Constantinople. Abdul Hamid, unwilling to sever his relations with Europe, was forced to call a halt in July (1896) and the Governor Abdullah Pasha was recalled and replaced by George Verovits. An Imperial decree of August 1896 accorded autonomy to Crete "within the Ottoman Empire."¹

Autonomy did not prove a magically healing word. The repression which preceded the declaration forced thousands of Cretans to seek asylum in Greece, where national feeling rose in sympathy to a fever heat. The factors for friction were everywhere present. The new regime could have only an ephemeral existence. The Porte, in the first place, acted with bad faith and did not honour the pledges it had given. Secondly, the local representatives of the powers, who undertook to elaborate the system of reform, were not in agreement among themselves. And above all, the local Turkish chiefs made it plain that they would oppose any arrangement which would weaken Ottoman rule over the island. The world everywhere was in a state of flux and turmoil. The Anglo-Russian colonial rivalry in Asia, the Anglo-French colonial rivalry in Africa, the Anglo-German economic and political rivalry in the Near East were beginning to affect seriously the harmony among the Powers. The Balkan States were pitted against one another because of Macedonia. Russia and Austria-Hungary were playing an equivocal game. The Jameson Raid had precipitated a crisis for Great Britain in South Africa. Russian intervention in Korea and the scramble for concessions in China were diverting the attentions of the Powers to the Far East.¹

In such a whirlwind of conflicts it was natural that in the event of a Greco-Turkish war, Greece would be left alone to bear the brunt. The Government of Constantinople was ready to punish Greece for her own failure to "pacify" Crete. Greek journalists and politicians advocated the adoption of measures which would

¹ Quoted by Gibbons: *Venizelos*.

inevitably lead to war. Venizelos, apprehensive of the results of unchecked drifting, tried to influence Athenian editors to change their tone, realising that isolated Greek action against the Ottoman Empire could only lead to disaster. One of those whom he visited was M. Caclamanos, for many years Greek Minister in London, then editor of the daily paper *Asty*. It is at this point that we catch a glimpse of Venizelos in his first debut as an imaginative and persuasive statesman. This is how M. Caclamanos relates the interview:—

"I was young, very young for the editor of a newspaper. The Cretan question had entered a new and acute phase. The concert of Powers suggested a hybrid solution, *viz.*, a return to the famous Pact of Halepa. Greek hopes and aspirations were once more frustrated. We carried on a most violent campaign, without respite or indulgence, against the Government. We demanded union with the mother country. The Greek Government was annoyed . . . Ministers . . . had vainly interceded with me. The King himself had delegated one of his aides-de-camp to expostulate, but my staff and I remained immovable.

"On a certain evening, one of the active leaders of the Cretan revolution was announced. It was M. Venizelos . . . At the moment I was writing an article. The Cretan leader was a man I admired, both for his indomitable courage and gallantry, but I did not accept him as a source of inspiration for my article, which I continued to write. M. Venizelos, with eyes glittering behind his professorial spectacles, seated himself before me. He had a small dark beard; he was wearing a soft collar, a black suit, and Cretan boots which came to his knees. His face, the expression of his remarkable eyes, and especially his smile—that mysterious smile of Leonardo's Gioconda—surprised me. He began to speak. I put down my pen. A vague uneasiness changed swiftly into a vivid interest. I listened to the Cretan chief, this 'highlander' as I had thought him to be, only to learn new lessons in history, politics, and diplomacy. During half an hour he held my closest attention by his wonderful eloquence. Without coming into collision with my opinions, he asserted that although the solution involved by the revival of the Pact of Halepa was not complete, it was in the interest of small nations not to oppose the policy prescribed by the Powers. In other words, that the little states must adapt themselves to circumstances, and endeavour to realise their national aspirations by degrees. He alluded to Cavour and Italy. He prophesied an epoch when the world, uplifted by a sense of the iniquity of despotism, would rise for the realisation of a democratic ideal, the accomplishment of the wish of the people. He made some pleasant remarks about my paper, discreetly adding that its energies might be utilised to greater advantage in the future.

"I confess that M. Venizelos charmed and subjugated me. Profound and instinctive admiration rose within me. It seemed that a new star was about to show itself and shed a brilliant light on the Hellenes. I felt somewhat in the same frame of mind as an astronomer who detects a new and luminous body in the heavⁿs."

"Before M. Venizelos left me, I explained some of my sensations to him. 'Monsieur,' I said, 'there is only one man with the power to make me alter my opinion, you are that man.'

"On the following day an article, which was considered very clever, appeared in my journal. This article was nothing in reality but a summary of M. Venizelos's speech to me in my office. It put an end to the campaign of the *Asty*.

"My sudden conversion was attributed to various influences. No one, however, knew anything of my interview of the previous day, nor did anyone guess the real cause of my changed policy."¹

Affairs in Crete remained in a confused condition (worse even than in Greece proper). Tension between the two elements of the population reached a breaking point. The Greeks, inflamed by nationalism, were fighting for their political as well as their economic freedom. Their methods were clumsy and provocative towards the Mohammedans, as they had been for centuries. To them the fight was not only against the Ottoman Government, but against Mohammedanism. The same religious blindness, fanned to fanaticism, existed among the Turks. Local chiefs and the military authorities were inciting the Turkish people to acts of violence.

During elections passions run higher than usual, and during the elections of January 1897 massacres began again in Canea and Rethymne. On February 4, Venizelos, hearing of the massacres while electioneering in Kydonia, went to Malaxa, a mountainous range overlooking the capital, and declared a revolution. From there, with a hundred men and five leaders, he proceeded to the seashore of Armyris and boarded a sailing ship, which succeeded in escaping the blockade of the Powers, and landed him in Akrotiri.

The Cretan insurrection of 1896 at once grew in strength. Venizelos assumed the leadership of the "Cretan Christian Defence Force" and established his headquarters in Akrotiri. Later a revolutionary committee was elected with Venizelos as one of its members. The place was immediately fortified. Walls were built and masses of stones placed where access was easy. Venizelos helped in the work and took an active part in the construction of defences. He went out personally to reconnoitre, and

¹ Quoted by Chester: *Life of Venizelos*, pp. 27-29. Retold by M. Caclamanos in *Eleutheron Vema*, April 5, 1926.

commanded an offensive with the object of cutting the Turkish lines of communication between Canea and Suda Bay. He picked his troops, and placed every man in position. Below ran the road, held by a Turkish garrison. This was their objective.

At dawn, he led his men out. Over rugged country the few hundred Cretans charged down the mountain slope. The Turks, though taken by surprise, put up a terrific resistance and held their lines. But the attackers, taking advantage of the ground, pushed steadily on. Venizelos ran along, encouraging his men. He deliberately refused to take cover, and by his courage he inspired them. By noon the issue was undecided. The Turks lost heavily, but their line was still intact. Nothing could force the revolutionaries to retreat. They kept hammering at the Turkish fortified positions and towards dusk in a grim, desperate bayonet charge, forced them back in the direction of Canea.

The revolutionaries did not have enough men to pursue the retreating Turks. They went back to their positions and waited for reinforcements from the province of Apokorona. Meanwhile, the "Revolutionary Committee" issued a manifesto in which it accused the Porte of massacring the Christians.

"The Christian population of Crete asks for the generosity and humanity of the Great Powers and of the whole civilised world, to help to bring about a solution which will definitely put an end to a situation which is a shame and a stigma to humanity."

The Greek King was asked in unequivocal language to annex Crete. This was demanded by the situation—continued the manifesto—and anything short of that would be treachery to the Cretans. The Greek Government's position was indeed unenviable. She was urged by the flaming demand of the rebels and the pressure of public opinion to undertake direct action. Turkey was amassing her armies on the border of Thessaly.

On February 10, Prince George was sent to Crete in command of a flotilla of torpedo boats. Three days later two thousand Greek soldiers disembarked and took possession of the island in the name of the King of Greece.

The Powers, furious at these lightning developments which challenged their authority, despatched the international fleet to Suda Bay with the usual instructions; the *status quo*. Admiral

Cavenaro, who commanded the international fleet, disembarked troops with the object of stopping the Greeks and Turks from fighting, and bringing the insurgents to reason. The first ultimatum served on Venizelos demanded the hauling down of the Greek flag flying over his camp. This was refused. On the following day, the warships opened fire. The flag was struck down, but it was raised again. It is both amusing and significant that at this time Venizelos took up in earnest the study of the English language, in anticipation of being called upon to interview the English admiral. While shells from the English and Allied warships were raining on his camp, he was at grips with English text books. Thirty years later, to a question from an English lady as to when he had learnt the English language, Venizelos answered laughingly, "I learned my English, Madame, while your fleet was bombarding me in Akrotiri."

Allied troops were landed. Colonel Egerton, in command, asked for the surrender of the revolutionaries. Venizelos replied, "We acquired this position at the price of our blood; we have not been driven out by the shells of your warships, and death alone will force us to abandon it." To further overtures suggesting the acceptance of nominal Turkish suzerainty which would eventually allow the matter to be settled equitably by the Powers, the answer was emphatically in the negative.

From the very beginning, Venizelos took an intransigent attitude on the question of union. Nothing else would fit the rigid framework of his plans. His obstinacy was not born of confusion, but from a profound belief that such action alone would further his aims. Was it an apprenticeship through which the future statesman was passing, characteristic of a phase in his development, or was it an unshakable conviction at which he had arrived so early in his life? At least, whatever his motives, they were brilliantly portrayed and logically argued.

A British naval officer, steeped in the traditions of his class concerning the rights of subject peoples to challenge the overlordship or their rulers, was delegated to carry out parleys with Venizelos. The officer found Venizelos a quiet, reasonable young man, ready to see the difficulties of the Powers in dealing with Turkey, but emphatic in his refusal to sacrifice Crete on the

altar of their convenience. "Your Foreign Office," he said, "is in a tight place and you can go as slow as you like with the Sublime Porte. Make a feint of coercing us if you feel you have to. I shall restrain my men. But it must be only a feint. If your soldiers and marines, for whatever reason, go beyond a certain line I shall indicate to you, we shall open fire. Then you will be up against a guerrilla war that will not pay, and that will not help you at all in your diplomatic game at Constantinople."

"Why do you not put yourselves in our hands?" asked the officer. "You know we have already freed Crete, except in name, and if you work with the Powers, your day will come more quickly than by forcing our hand and compelling us to oppose you."

"The European policy," replied Venizelos, "is invariably the maintenance of the *status quo* and you will do nothing for the subject races unless we, by taking the initiative, make you realise that by helping us against the Turks is the lesser of two evils."

The comment of the envoy was, "Damn it all, the beggar is right, and I hope we shan't have to shoot him."¹

The naval demonstration pleased Constantinople. It showed that the Powers were not willing to accept any modification of the status of Crete. Disembarkation of troops had been, in a way, helpful to Venizelos, because it made his position immune from Turkish attack. While he was there interviewing correspondents and seeing the delegates of the Powers, fighting with the Turks was being carried on in a desultory fashion in other parts of the island.

In a proclamation issued on February 23, the Admirals stated that the purpose of naval concentration was the pacification of the island, and they hastened to assure the people that peace would be established, pending a permanent solution of the Cretan question. They asked the public to keep calm, maintaining obedience and loyalty to Constantinople. To this the revolutionary committee answered with a long memorandum, drafted by Venizelos, that the revolutionaries were not willing to pin their faith to the illusion the Powers so adroitly tried to foster. It questioned the very purpose of the proclamation and asked whether the Powers sincerely desired a peaceful solution,

¹ P. H. Box: *Three Master Builders and Another*, p. 199.

or were only trying by postponement, procrastination and evasion to rob the people of the fruits of their struggles. The only possible and just solution was union with Greece. The memorandum went on to show that union was dictated both for patriotic and economic reasons. It pilloried the Government of Abdul Hamid by citing the Armenian massacres. In a sentence of true statesmanship, Venizelos tried to allay the fears of the Turkish minority and answered the charges of the Porte that in the event of union with Greece the Turks would be left at the mercy of the Christian people. A prolongation of the present struggle would contribute to the mutual destruction of the two indigenous elements. Only by a righteous solution of the Cretan question would their harmonious co-existence be guaranteed. The memorandum ended by saying that the Powers, in continually intervening in the internal affairs of the island, were actuated by alleged principles of humanity. Their intervention always ended in uncertainty. It helped to postpone the decisive solution which would have been born out of the armed contest, and provided for the continuation of slaughter and general destruction. "From that point of view we think that all further massacres will be brought about by the attitude of the Powers, which forcibly prevents us from ending the present state of suspense, by a revolutionary war, and which, on the other hand, does not strive to grant the desired solution."

The Admirals, offended by this memorandum, decided to dislodge the revolutionaries from their fortified positions by force. Their attempts failed miserably.

At the instigation of Great Britain, the Allied Admirals decided on a declaration of autonomy under Turkish suzerainty, and almost at once proceeded to blockade Crete until the insurgents should express their willingness to accept. Greece was given an ultimatum to recall men and ships in six days. The Greek Government found themselves in an awkward position. Failure to comply with the orders of the Powers meant war with Turkey. Obedience meant internal strife, a split in the army, and probably civil war. Defiance of the Pan-Hellenist Committee called *Ethniki Hetairia*, which had powerful support in the armed forces, was not easy. Venizelos had meanwhile become

influential enough to make his voice heard and his opinion respected among the revolutionaries. Although not directly advocating war against Turkey by his action, he helped to make it a certainty.

The Cretan rebel was now thirty-four years old. His fame had travelled beyond Crete to Greece, where he was credited with astute intelligence and the power to take energetic extreme action. Did he believe then that it was possible for Greece, bankrupt, unarmed, exhausted, with only a hundred thousand men in the field, to decide an issue by a contest of arms with a state which stretched from the Adriatic to the Persian Gulf and from the Black Sea to the Indian Ocean; did he cherish any illusions about the intentions of the Powers, hoping for an intervention to save Greece from humiliation, and restore freedom to his native land?

What his motives were have never been divulged. Years later, he tried to explain his action by saying, "that 1897 was one of those critical moments when the voluntary compromising of a principle would have been more disastrous than the failure to secure its triumph by holding out as long as it was humanly possible."

The failure of Greece to abide by the decision of the Powers led to the Greco-Turkish war. On April 17, 1897, Turkey declared war. The whole Greek race rallied to the cause of the unredeemed Greeks in their fight for liberation. Enthusiasm was boundless, but it could not triumph against superior numbers and arms. The soldiers fought bravely, but the officers were inefficient, the high command incapable. No preparatory staff work had been done, and there was a marked lack of ammunition. The result was a Greek defeat which turned into a complete rout. Had it not been for the intervention of the Powers, who were hesitant to draw new boundaries, Greece would have disappeared once again from the comity of nations.

The Greco-Turkish war cannot be called a war between two states. It was a national revolution. Defeat did not mean final failure, but was simply a setback and a postponement of the final contest. Had it not been for 1897, the triumph of 1912 might not have taken place.

Greek defeat shattered the hopes of many of the Cretan revolutionaries; the effects of the blockade became increasingly felt; food was scarce and the population was in want. Under the hammer blows of hunger, the Cretans were divided into two hostile camps—the “Autonomists” who accepted the Allied terms and were ready to negotiate, and the “Unionists” under Venizelos, who still held out on Akrotiri.

Venizelos's policy met with steady opposition. The bulk of the population were sick of his quixotic obstinacy. His intractability cost Greece a lost war and a handsome indemnity. Turkey was now victorious and arrogant. Turkish regulars and irregulars were massacring and burning once more. In the elections which followed, his candidates were opposed, but he himself remained faithful to his aims, determined to force the hand of the Powers.

The elections brought into existence, or rather strengthened, the Revolutionary Assembly, formed upon the departure of the Greek armed forces, and Venizelos, paradoxically enough, was elected President. But when he arrived at Aharnes where the Assembly was sitting he met with a violent opposition from a body of men purporting to represent Cretan public opinion. During the first session, a resolution was introduced instructing the Assembly to enter into negotiations with the Powers on the basis of autonomy. Venizelos protested. “To accept autonomy,” he declared, “is to betray both Crete and Greece. I shall never let history accuse me of being a traitor. For what other name can be given to a man who would accept autonomy? Have you forgotten that it is on your account that the mother country is so deeply involved? Have you forgotten the heavy sacrifices made by her in order to come to your help? And now, when she is suffering, in her hour of trial, shall we be so base as to betray her, forget her and abandon her? Neither I nor the volunteers of Akrotiri wish to become traitors.”¹

Treachery in this case was the acceptance of autonomy. Or was it a convenient political browbeating? In any case, Venizelos had made a premature claim in the pantheon of history for the purity of his nationalism. Twenty years later he was to be installed

¹ Kerofilas: *Eleutherios Venizelos—His Life and Work*, p. 22.

as the ruler in the capital of Greece with the help of those with whom he now considered it treacherous to enter into negotiations.

His words stung the opposition; the situation grew tense; angry shouts arose; insults were viciously and freely exchanged. A deputy drew a knife and rushed upon him; Venizelos faced his assailant unmoved. A friend intervened and gripped the would-be assassin and Venizelos's life was saved. A general uproar followed, blows were exchanged, and the session ended in pitiful confusion. Before he made his way back to Akrotiri, Venizelos's house was set on fire and razed to the ground. He escaped after a speech in which he denounced his attackers as traitors to Hellas.

The Turcophil-British Press attacked Venizelos. He was represented as the agent responsible for the sharp turn of events in the island. Dark fears were expressed for the future "now that the 'Brigand' was President of the Revolutionary Assembly." As an answer, Venizelos sent a lengthy reply to Admiral Cavenaro, head of the international fleet. The letter is the essence of lucidity and concision. Throughout his career Venizelos was at his best only when representing the case of Greece, or arguing that case with the heads or the representatives of the Governments of Europe. His method in such cases was the unemotional, intensely rational, exposition and marshalling of facts. When he was writing for, or addressing a Greek audience, he remained always, though clear and lucid, emotional and temperamental. "I never ceased to urge," he wrote, "that once the Greek kingdom, under external pressure, was forced to withdraw its troops from the island, we were obliged to adapt ourselves to the decisions of the Powers, and to accept autonomy, which has been promised us as a new stage towards the fulfilment of our national idea. But relying upon the declaration of the Admirals that they should not proclaim the nature of the new constitution prior to the conclusion of Greco-Turkish hostilities and the signing of the peace, we decided that, as the people should only be called upon to sanction the decision of the Powers, to wait until the promulgation of the constitution, and if this was complete, if it provided for the evacuation of the Turkish garrison, to accept autonomy and co-operate in its application."¹

¹ G. Papantonaki: *Political Career of Venizelos*, p. 67.

The withdrawal of the Turkish troops was to precede all preliminary discussions. In 1896 he was ready to accept the provisions of the Pact of Halepa. But the events of February 1897 had convinced him that that outworn garment should be discarded. If Crete was not to be given to Greece, at least she should have a more generous measure of autonomy embodied in a new and liberal constitution.

The internal dissension and the campaign against him in the British Press forced Venizelos to change his tactics. Nothing could do more harm to the Cretan cause than the leadership of a man distrusted by his people, proclaimed by Turkey, being looked on askance by the Greek Government and attacked and vituperated by the Powers. At the beginning of September, after consulting his colleagues, he left for Athens to persuade M. Sfakianakes (a retired Cretan politician who enjoyed the respect of the islanders) to assume the leadership of the Revolutionary Assembly. Sfakianakes accepted and the two conferred with the Greek Cabinet. It was made clear to them that autonomy should be accepted as an expedient. Propaganda for union with Greece was not to be abandoned. Above all, the "insurgents" should begin negotiations in a spirit not likely to compromise Greece any longer, and enable her to conclude an honourable peace with Turkey. The "insurgents" should give the appearance of negotiating as a sovereign people without lending colour to the belief that they have been forced to do so by the Powers.

The withdrawal of the Turkish garrison should be made an irrevocable condition for the abandonment of the insurgent movement, and the Powers should guarantee this autonomy and take it on themselves to appoint the Governor.

In October of the same year Venizelos and Sfakianakes returned to Crete where the latter was unanimously elected President of the "Revolutionary Assembly." Constantinople hinted that she would not withdraw her troops and that she reserved the right to appoint the Governor. At once two manifestos putting the claims of the Cretans were forwarded to the Admirals. The second of these dealt with the proposed appointment of the Governor by the Sultan, and ended with the warning:—

"A Governor, appointed by, or subject to, the Porte, will never be accepted as the representative of the people or as the protector of their interests, neither will the Government under him be tolerated for long."

The Greco-Turkish Treaty was signed in Constantinople on December 4, 1897, but the Cretans were left in dark uncertainty as to the future status of their island home. The Powers were too half-hearted, too divided to effect a solution, while Turkey was adamant in her determination not to forfeit in any form her sovereignty over the island. Had the insurgents acted according to the instructions of the Powers, nothing would have prevented the Sultan from making good his intentions of reconquering Crete. In this respect the political foresight of Venizelos saved the revolution. The Sultan was not master of the situation, neither could he expect to overcome the revolutionaries easily. His demands, if conceded by the Powers, would only have resulted in prolonging the revolution. Negotiations, postponements and diplomatic delays which roused the antagonisms of the Powers were welcomed by the Turks, who saw in the prevailing disagreement the possibility of a more rigid enforcement of the *status quo*.

Venizelos vehemently opposed the temporising tactics of European diplomacy without coming into an open rupture with its military exponents in the island. During this very difficult period, he displayed conciliation tempered with firmness. Had he antagonised the Powers, who had already increased their zones of occupation as a proof of good faith to Turkey, they might have helped Turkey against the rebels. He eventually succeeded in getting the Revolutionary Assembly recognised by the Allies. His struggles were crowned with triumph, and an opportunity was thus given him to show his mettle. He constituted a Provisional Government with Sfakianakes as President, which at once proceeded to give a demonstration of its efficiency despite the fact that the international force was still in occupation and Turkish troops were still garrisoned in Canea.

The Powers' guarantee was purely nominal, if not superfluous. Germany and Austria-Hungary made known their intention of withdrawing their divisions from the island. The Government

of Constantinople declined to withdraw its battalions and persisted in the claim to appoint the Governor.

The situation was made difficult, even dangerous, by the refusal to make decisions one way or the other. The Powers could not force Turkey into acceptance and were unwilling to give a free hand to the Cretans. Turkey refused to accept a solution or to forward one of her own, and the Cretans wanted to have their own way, accepting autonomy in so far as it was compatible with their *amour propre* and so far as its ultimate working would not bar the way to union.

A sudden event, however, changed the whole course of development. While all the parties were still enmeshed in the net of fruitless negotiations, a band of fanatical Moslems, assisted by Turkish troops, attacked a detachment of British bluejackets on September 4. The British Vice-Consul and seventeen soldiers, among whom was an officer, were killed and forty-two wounded. Two days later, in a dastardly onslaught in the dark of night seven hundred Greeks were slaughtered.

Everything was changed. Seventeen Englishmen killed was enough to vest Near Eastern affairs with a new interest. At once the attitude of the Powers stiffened. The army was increased by one extra regiment from every country, and on November 4, the Powers announced that the island was to be under their control, and English, French, Russian and Italian forces landed at various points and ordered the Turks to evacuate their positions. Twenty days later the last Turkish troops left for Anatolia, never to return. And so by an accident, the accident of murder, Crete rid herself of Ottoman tyranny.

Russia, apprehensive of British designs in the Mediterranean and fearing the possible possession of Crete by England, suggested that the new governorship be given over to Prince George of Greece, who was related through his mother to the Russian Imperial family. The purpose was clear. While England, by virtue of her superior forces in the Mediterranean, would have a decisive voice in the affairs of the island, Russia hoped to be able to wield equally effective influence by means of a puppet prince. The whole affair was ill advised; it aroused the fears of the Moslem minority, who interpreted the appointment of the son of

the King of Greece to the Governorship as nothing less than *de facto* Greek sovereignty. The guarantee of the West was not enough to protect them against what they considered the "lurking" vengeance of the Christians. Afraid lest the new régime yield a reversal for them, they started a stampede, and three-quarters of the entire Turkish population left the island in a panic.

Venizelos and his followers accepted the new régime as purely transitional. The whole outlook and character of the man was averse to handing over the destinies of the people to the tender mercies of the Powers. His attitude during the period of Cretan autonomy was one of support and obstruction, complete legalism and utter extremism. He won the name of being a gambler in ideals and an unfriendly Athenian daily paper called him "a contemporary Don Quixote armed with the political craftiness of a Machiavelli."

He himself had a different story to tell about his attitude. Speaking at a banquet given in his honour by the foreign Press at the Peace Conference in 1919, he said: "After I finished my studies in Athens I returned home and hung out my bandolier. I had not tried many cases in the court of my home island, before it became necessary for me to take arms against the Turkish Government. Although my father was born in Greece, I was considered an Ottoman subject—therefore a rebel—because my mother was born under the Turkish flag. At the end of this revolution, I returned again to my town and resumed my legal profession. I did not have time, however, to go far with it, for I had to take arms again and go to the mountains. Soon I reached the point where I had to decide whether I ought to be a lawyer by profession and a revolutionary at intervals or a revolutionary by profession and a lawyer at intervals. Since my compatriots met with opposition in their efforts to bring about the complete union of Crete with mother Greece, I naturally became a revolutionary by profession."¹

His revolutionism was conditioned by, and limited to, union with Greece. It did not and could not go any further, because for Venizelos the world was formed of nations and religious sects,

¹ H. A. Gibbons: *Venizelos*, p. 18.

and classes and social inequity were simply notions, not included in the grand panorama of Greek traditions.

* * *

On December 21, 1898, Prince George landed in Crete as the High Commissioner of the Powers. Two hundred and twenty-nine years of Ottoman rule came to an end!

The first act of the new administration was the appointment of a Committee of fifteen to work out a Constitution, with Venizelos as one of its members. His contribution was mainly confined to legal questions, in which he brought abundant learning and authority to bear on the proceedings. In drafting the Constitution, he fought valiantly to safeguard the status of the Turks in Crete and inserted clauses guaranteeing their complete religious freedom and political equality. But even his learning failed to free the "Liberal Constitution" from the inescapable defects of infantilism. It gave enormous powers to the High Commissioner, who was to be assisted by five Councillors appointed by himself, and was entitled to nominate ten members of the elective Chamber. And the ample scope afforded by the Constitution for the exercise of dictatorial rule developed the autocratic tendencies of the Prince.

Venizelos cannot be excused for this error. He was by far the principal moulder of the Constitution. He had been given the opportunity of judging the intellectual standard and administrative capacity of the young Prince in an interview, as soon as the latter assumed the office of High Commissioner.¹

¹ Soon after Prince George assumed office he wanted to buy a considerable quantity of timber from Trieste for repairing damages done in the recent upheavals. As there was as yet no responsible government he invited the Chairman of the Executive Council, Sfakianakes, and Venizelos and asked for their consent for the buying of timber. Venizelos opposed the proposition on the grounds that it could not be done without serious abuse of public funds for the quoted prices were high, and suggested that it would be better to let the matter stand until a responsible government was elected to deal with the question. The Prince did not agree. "If your Highness wants to listen to us as the exponents of public will this is our view, otherwise you are free to act as you wish," said Venizelos. The Prince was angered, and remarked "Gentlemen, you should know that I came here to rule a la Grand Pierre." To which Sfakianakes answered, "Very well, your Highness, we will beg you only to spare us the massacre of Peter the Great."

In May a Government was established with Venizelos as Councillor for Justice. The Prince and Venizelos were temperamentally irreconcilable, and a clash between them was inevitable. The Prince, nurtured in the notions of Monarchy by the grace of God, brought up by a Romanov mother, narrow-minded, young, with despotic tendencies, and Venizelos, a clever lawyer with few, if any, moral scruples, and an astute politician, burning with a strange mystical belief and an acquired detestation of despotism, were not a particularly suitable pair to co-operate for long. For two years they carried on together without open friction, in spite of numerous disagreements. Venizelos's contribution in restoring normal conditions in Crete was enormous. He endowed the island with a splendid judicial system, and helped with his unrivalled experience as a rebel in the organisation of the *gendarmerie*. What had satisfied the Powers most and gradually overcame their opposition was the smooth internal reorganisation of the Courts and the police system—for which Venizelos was responsible.

In the spring of 1901 the clash was, in the opinion of the general public, precipitated by an astounding speech by Venizelos in which he advocated the raising of Crete into an independent principality as the last stage of union with Greece. He suggested that a local militia, under Greek officers, should be inaugurated; and that the Powers be asked to declare complete autonomy for the island, cancelling the appointment of the Commissioner and allowing the Assembly to elect its highest officer. As the crowning expression of independence, there was to be a Cretan army. The Powers were to be asked that with the development of local military units, their garrisons were to be withdrawn. The reasons with which Venizelos sought to justify this sudden *volte-face* was that, in this way, Crete would shake off international control, and at the first given opportunity she could declare for union with Greece, supported even by one single power, whereas now she had to have the sanction not only of the four protesting powers, England, France, Italy and Russia, but also of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Not many clearly understood the purpose behind it. The majority interpreted it as an attempt to declare Crete an inde-

pendent state.¹ The Athenian Press, wrongly informed by the entourage of the Prince, launched a vicious onslaught against what it termed "this new treachery."

What were the motives? Were Venizelos's suggestions an act of treachery? Independence (self-determination as it came to be known in the post-war years), was by far the safest guarantee that union could not be unnecessarily prolonged. The inauguration of the local militia was the embryo of a future army to be raised in Crete for the coming war for the liberation of irredentist Greece. But what about his suggestion for the "election of the Highest Officer"? Naturally there could not be self-determination if somebody else had to provide the ruler.

His arguments, however highly inspired, were received with misgivings. Everybody sensed intrigue and looked for ulterior motives. "Did he plan out for himself the life presidency of the Cretan Republic?" asked an Athenian paper, and added cynically that "his motives are not so altruistic as they appear to be, because a lawyer in politics cannot make a good saint."

Yet many more were rightly baffled. Doubt assailed the fortress of confidence. Four years before Venizelos was risking his life for union with Greece. Who could believe that now he was actuated by equally high motives in supporting an entirely different political objective? Three years elapsed before the public learned the reasons behind this sudden reversion. In an interview given to the Athenian paper *Kaeroi*, Venizelos revealed that his suggestion was nothing more than a well thought out plan for counteracting the intrigues of the Prince and the Court of Greece. The story was as follows: In November 1900 Prince George made a tour of the principal European Courts, ostensibly for the purpose of clearing the ground preparatory to the union of Crete with Greece. But this was not the whole truth. The Prince sought to find out whether the Powers had any objections to Crete being given a Constitution similar to that of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *i.e.*, to be ruled over by a Greek Prince appointed by the King of the Hellenes and responsible only to the King. By this procedure, the troublesome appearance of local councillors

¹ Prince Nicholas of Greece in his book, *The Fifty Years of My Life*, subscribed to this view as regards the motives of Venizelos.

could be dispensed with. Venizelos, to whom the Prince was thoughtless enough to confide his intentions on the matter, was quick to realise what was in store and remarked pertinently, "I am glad, your Highness, that your endeavours failed." The plan was consequently buried, and did not come before the Assembly.

Venizelos did not reveal anything of that conversation until years later, but he was aware that moves were on foot between the Prince and the Court of Athens to bring about such an arrangement. That is why he suddenly plunged into a new adventure.

The Athenian Press, particularly that section close to the Court, eagerly jumped to the attack. Venizelos was again the victim of editorial venom. No longer able to co-operate with his calumniator, he tendered his resignation, pleading ill-health. This the Prince refused to accept, saying that "running away before the work of reorganisation was completed was tantamount to high treason." Venizelos could not accept the premise of the High Commissioner. In an interview he had with him on March 18, 1901, he reiterated his position, stating he could no longer serve any useful purpose by remaining in the Government where he was almost in perpetual disagreement with his colleagues and in open hostility to the High Commissioner! Again his resignation was refused. But talk of treason did not deter him. In order to facilitate matters, and unwilling to risk an open split, Venizelos suggested that he would abstain from politics for at least two years and that he would support the work of reorganisation of the High Commissioner in all its essentials. After that promise was given things looked different. The Prince sighed with relief and the resignation of Venizelos was formally accepted.

Could any politician, at loggerheads with the chief of a Government on a basic question of fundamental principle, and vilified as a result, be so lacking in ordinary courage as to give a guarantee that for two years he would level no criticism, and would refrain from any action, against an administration which he knew to be developing into a tyranny? And this in order to avoid the light talk of treachery. Treachery to what? To the son of the King of the Hellenes? The incident reveals much of the true Venizelos

—his lack of quick decision; his avoidance of the dramatic. Though his life was full of drama, not one of his many actions was in itself dramatic. His successes were simply the climax of incidents he was instrumental in setting in motion. Never do we see him as the man who will suddenly flash out of the blue and cast his shadow upon the scene. He relied chiefly on the steady, relentless growth of his moral stature.

After Venizelos left, the Prince consulted his private secretary—who was bitterly opposed to Venizelos. Resignation was not enough. They thought that it would serve their purpose better if they attacked the fallen minister. A dismissal could harm him more than a resignation, and so, on April 1, the Official Gazette published a notice that Venizelos was dismissed “because he expressed himself publicly in a way calculated to harm the cause of Crete.”

Venizelos at once realised that his resignation was accepted with a vengeance. He was dismissed and insulted. But the Prince and his advisers were sailing in a sea of delusions as regards their opponent. By now Venizelos was more or less the accredited representative of the merchant classes, the most wealthy element in Crete, and his prestige among the peasantry was considerable. He was wielding a powerful pen and was a lucid and persuasive orator.

He was no longer morally bound by his promise to abstain from opposition in view of the base trick of the Prince and opposition to the High Commissioner was demanded now both by political principles and the demands of honour.

“The Prince has had his revenge,” he declared, “but there will be a sequel.” In Crete, the politics of vendetta could no longer allow any compromise. The quarrel had to be settled one way or another, but only with the complete triumph of the one and the annihilation of the other.

CHAPTER III

VENIZELOS'S TRIUMPH OVER THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

FOR a short spell Venizelos lay low. He did not throw down the gauntlet at once. A consummate tactician, he waited until the princely slander had lost its deadly sting before he acted. Freedom from the responsibility of office gave him his opportunity. He reformed his political party, which so far was a working coalition of several deputies. He issued a paper in conjunction with his friend Eliakes, in order to carry on propaganda for education, instilling into the minds of the people the idea that political freedom and economic prosperity were possible for Crete only through union with Greece.

The Prince was confirmed in the High Commissionership for a second term. His chief aim now was the stamping out of the Venizelist opposition. He succeeded in getting the Press, the Courts, and the Church well in hand. As his rule was steadily degenerating into despotism its inefficiency became more apparent. The Liberals let no opportunity go by without exposing the regime. An article, written anonymously by Venizelos, was considered as subversive, the paper was suspended, and Eliakes, the editor, was condemned to imprisonment and a fine of two thousand drachmas. Later when Eliakes was again arrested on a similar charge, for criticising the Archbishop for his subservience to the High Commissioner, Venizelos accepted the authorship of the article and was sentenced to a short term of imprisonment.

The High Commissioner was uneasy. He felt insecure as long as the Venizelist propaganda continued. He would not suppress it by force—the Powers were not prepared to connive at dictatorial measures—but he sought by devious means to discredit his rival. He submitted false reports to the Greek Government concerning the activities of Venizelos, which led to some violent debates in the Greek Parliament, where the integrity and patriotism of Venizelos were publicly vindicated. There was

some plain speaking on the subject, the opposition, in particular, making a mockery of the Prince's accusations. It was stated that his advisers were responsible for the charge of treachery and their action sprang from personal motives and should, therefore, be criticised and discredited. This was a serious set-back for the Prince and he was forced for a while to change his tactics. He called the close friends and supporters of Venizelos to a private audience and attempted to convert them to his own point of view. On one occasion, when M. Skoulas (a close collaborator of Venizelos) was interviewed by the Prince, the former asked to be presented with tangible proofs of Venizelos's criminal activities regarding the Cretan cause, promising in such a case to be the first to start a crusade against him. No evidence was produced, but the weapons of flattery and persuasion were used to win the deputy. These failed, and the interview ended in discord with the exchange of verbal threats. In the end the Prince, forgetful of his high office, threatened that he would have M. Skoulas unseated and chased out of Crete. A short time afterwards, making his threat good, he visited the birthplace of M. Skoulas and spoke against his anti-national attitude.

A committee, elected by the Liberals, sailed for Athens in 1902, to plead for the intervention of the Greek Government and the King to try to curb the dictatorial tendencies of the Prince. Under pressure from the Court, the Greek Government refused to consider the demands of the delegation, fortifying itself with the excuse that any interference, however indirect, from the Greek Government might lead to conflict with the Powers.

Meanwhile the Prince, enraged at the attempts to denounce him in the Greek capital, zealously led the fight against the Liberals. Realising the precariousness of his position with Venizelos in opposition, he conducted a personal campaign to "enlighten public opinion." He imposed restrictions on the Press and on public meetings. His satellite papers howled for complete suppression of the liberties of the Cretan people as "unnecessary luxuries." The law courts were flooded with judges sympathetic to the régime and the clergy offered its assistance. It was evident that the situation was developing into one of administration by decrees.

To this poisonous propaganda, Venizelos answered with a sharp article intended as a warning. "Where authority by arbitrary measures robs the people of their liberties," he wrote, "there opens the legitimate road of revolution out of which the people will emerge victorious, fighting for the maintenance of their freedom and crushing mercilessly the oppressing power." Further on he expressed regret that the Constitution placed so much authority in the hands of the highest officer. He explained his share in forming the Constitution by saying that the immediate results of the victory of the revolution robbed them of that necessary sobriety by which they could see things in their true perspective.¹ But so great was the opposition to him, particularly of the clergy, that for a time he seriously entertained the thought of emigrating to Egypt and of withdrawing from all active politics. He was prevented from taking this extreme step by the insistence of his followers, who pointed out that desertion at such a time would be a death blow to the cause of liberty.

In the elections of 1903, Prince George became the central figure of political interest. He took an active part in the campaign on behalf of his candidates. The Archbishop also made a tour of the island, anathematising Venizelos. This "coalition" proved detrimental to the Venizelists. Only five of his party, including himself, were returned. As the election was fought under Court tyranny the results in no way represented the real feelings of the people. Venizelists were dismissed from the Government service and their posts were distributed among the subservient. The Prince, by using his discretionary powers, suspended the liberty of the Press entirely. He created an espionage system with which the corrupt Ottoman authority could show no parallel. The censorship of the Press was followed by tampering with private correspondence and telegraphic communications, and, gradually, the ground was prepared for the establishment of a personal dictatorship.

The European Press had by now become aware of the actions of the High Commissioner and his methods of administration were becoming increasingly known to the European public. Professor Antonios Giannares was arrested because he had

¹ *Keryx*, June 7-10, 1902.

thoughtlessly written a letter to Prince Nicolas (the brother of the High Commissioner), asking him to take his brother's place as ruler of the island as Prince George's methods were destined to have unpleasant results.¹ It was principally through the professor's trial that the Liberal English Press came to learn something of the methods by which Crete was administered.

In August 1904 delegates from all the provinces presented a petition to Prince George, asking him to make known to the Protecting Powers that the Cretan people unanimously demanded union with Greece. With this object in view, the Prince once more toured the capitals of Europe, nominally to solicit for union, but really to get a new mandate for another term of office, which he again succeeded in securing. On his return, he was assailed by the Venizelists as being very lukewarm in the presentation of the Cretan question, and because he had sacrificed Crete to his personal ambition.

Meanwhile Venizelos, accompanied by two other representatives, went to Athens to seek the good offices of the Greek Government to restore affairs in the island. The Greek Prime Minister, M. Theotokes, at the behest of the King, unexpectedly refused the delegation a hearing. Disowned by the Government, Venizelos was now free to act independently. By articles, interviews and speeches, he hinted that if the High Commissioner would not return to, and rule in the spirit of, the Constitution, he would be made to do so by force. Between the lines, Venizelos threatened nothing less than a revolution to bring the Prince to his senses. "We want to declare," he stated in an interview, "that the Cretan people are not and cannot be satisfied with a mere personal or dynastic union, by which an independent state would be created, having nothing in common with Greece except the monarchical factor."²

On his return to Crete he tried to come to an understanding with the leader of the Government. The High Commissioner intervened and forbade his chief minister to come to any agreement

¹ Prince Nicolas forwarded the letter to the High Commissioner, who instantly asked the public prosecutor to take legal action against the writer. Professor Giannares was sentenced to one and a half years' imprisonment. The sentence was denounced as monstrous and brutal by the British Press.

² *Kaeroi*, August 25, 1904.

with his rival. The Protecting Powers, now coming closer to one another by means of the *entente cordiale* found themselves in agreement about Crete. They decided that the *status quo* should be maintained and the international forces should remain stationed in the island. Prince George meanwhile was fast climbing the stairs of absolutism. He raised his private secretary to be chief minister, and filled all the Government and judicial posts with persons in his favour. His self-confidence was increasing, but along with it, the strength and virulence of the Venizelist opposition was growing.

In the spring of 1905 new elections were proclaimed. Prince George was ready again to tour the island and speak for his supporters. As the head of the State, he led his own party in the field in flagrant violation of the Constitution. The opposition parties came together and decided that a show of force was now necessary to curb the growth of tyranny. In their agreement, the opposition parties reiterated their desire for union and that their immediate aim was to revise the Constitution and rid the island of despotic rule, the object to be achieved by *armed popular uprising*. So one day in March 1905, the Prince and the Powers learned that Venizelos was once more leading an armed revolt. On the 23rd of the month, six hundred insurgents established themselves at Therisso, an almost impregnable hilly position not far from Canea.

"One fine March evening . . . a tall thin man of about forty with a sparse brown beard was walking towards Canea by the coast road which leads from the suburb of Halepa to the capital.

"At this time of the year it is already spring in the Island of Minos and the white villas of the suburb are half-hidden in greenery. High walls surround them, but are not so high as to prevent the passer-by from catching glimpses of gay flower beds. . . . In this little corner of an earthly paradise, Prince George's Palace, the consulates and the dwellings of the more wealthy Cretans are hidden among the winding paths. The man of whom we are speaking was just going down the steep hill, at the bottom of which stands the International Club, facing sea-wards, when a closed landau passed him, going in the same

direction. Thinking the carriage was empty, the man hailed it and the coachman, although he had a fare, stopped as soon as he recognised the stranger.

"The carriage door was opened and the Prince's private secretary put his head out. He recognised, or rather guessed, who the stranger was in the half-light and . . . he hurriedly got out in the hope of a private conversation, which, under the critical circumstances, would, he thought, be particularly desirable.

"But his illusion was short lived. M. Venizelos (for it was none other than the leader of the Opposition) with a few courteous words explained his mistake.

"The two opponents bowed coldly, and the private secretary renewed his drive towards Canea, while Venizelos, after stopping a few moments at the International Club to see his friends, entered the first vehicle he saw and was driven into the country to the village of Mournies, at the entrance of the deep gorge which leads by impassable goat-paths to the impregnable position of Therisso. The revolution of 1905 had begun."¹

The revolutionaries proclaimed publicly that the "whole of Crete is indissolubly united with Mother Greece." They ignored the proclamation of Prince George to disband, and repulsed the *gendarmerie* sent against them. On March 25, Venizelos submitted a memorandum to the Powers, the tone of which was apologetic. His purpose was to expose the High Commissioner and, at the same time, avoid an open conflict with the Powers. The Cretan question, he thought, could be solved without putting the whole Near Eastern question, then entering upon a critical stage, in a more precarious condition. But the Powers, through the High Commissioner, ordered the insurgents to haul down the Greek Flag, and threatened repressive measures.

Prince George, in his failure to bring the movement to an end, asked for reinforcements from the Powers in order to suppress it by force. The British and French Governments raised certain objections, apparently unwilling to alienate Greek public opinion, in view of the recent war alliance upon which they had embarked.

¹ Van den Brule: "*L'Orient Hellenique*," quoted by Kerofilas, *E. Venizelos*, pp. 38-40.

They equally wanted to avoid any injury to Turkish susceptibilities and thus throw Turkey into the arms of the Triple Alliance. The Russian Government, in the throes of a tremendous upheaval, with a nation-wide revolution threatening its existence, was anxious to demonstrate its power abroad against a small contingent of revolutionaries. The Tsarist armies were asked to assist the forces of the High Commissioner to suppress the rebellion. Though Venizelos made it known that the purpose of the revolution was to exercise moral pressure and had no intention of using violence, it was obvious that a violent encounter was now unavoidable.

The outbreak of the revolution brought Venizelos sharply into the limelight. The Greek Press devoted columns either to praising or condemning him. Public meetings were held and his name became known to every Greek household. The fact that his fight was directed against the King's son was another factor for the spreading of his popularity. Among certain sections of the Greek army he found unmistakable support. In the Republican Press he was hailed as the leader of the anti-dynastic movement. To M. Vlasis Gabrielides—the most brilliant Greek journalist of the first quarter of the twentieth century—Venizelos said, "We have no constitutionalism in Crete, we have despotism. We have no responsible Government. We have no free Press. We have only one governing will, that of the Prince." And further, "Our revolution is the work of enraged helots." The journalist found Venizelos in the highest of spirits—a man thriving on revolutions. His skin, he wrote, was that of a young person, and had it not been for his beard, it would have been difficult to determine his age. His charm and method of speech were convincing and irresistible.

The Russian Government started the ball rolling. England and France assisted secretly. Force was unavoidable. Venizelos petitioned the Greek Government and the Ministers of the Protecting Powers in Athens. The Powers were adamant. *Status quo* became the motto of European diplomacy concerning Crete. Why? In order to preserve the nominal sovereignty of the Sultan? By now the Sultan had as much authority over the island as Greece proper. In order to protect the Prince and

connive at his tyrannic excesses? Nothing could restore the Prince to the confidence of the Cretan people, not even the shells from the warships of the international fleet. In the whole history of diplomatic ineptitude and political stupidity, one can scarcely meet a parallel example of that of Crete. The question of a naval and military base, although concerning all the individual Powers, could not be solved by isolated action by any one of them without war. For nearly thirty years, the Powers used their fleet to prevent the Cretan people from fulfilling their national aspirations.

What then were the motives of the Powers and their inexplicable attachment to the miraculous name of *status quo*, which in this particular case was non-existent as Crete had no status whatsoever; at least, no status either internally or internationally acclaimed. The cynic might say it was a question of honour and prestige. Indeed, in the archives of diplomacy, these two words have long been masquerading as the protecting moral cover for the mundane reality of imperialistic interests.

The demands of the revolutionaries were refused and the island was threatened with martial law. No tangible guarantees were forthcoming and Venizelos decided that the insurgent movement must continue. His task was difficult. He had not only his followers to control, but had to deal with the coalition which constituted the revolutionary committee. Many of the committeemen were averse to forcing the issue to the point of armed contest.

In June it was made known that a regiment of Russian soldiers had embarked in Odessa for Crete. At the same time, British reinforcements had arrived from Malta.

On June 30, there was a serious encounter between the insurgents and Russians at Platania, the latter being supported by the guns of Russian and French warships. On August 16 a pitched battle was fought with the Russians near Rethymne. The revolutionaries, attacked by superior forces, were forced to withdraw to their mountainous stronghold. The Powers at once proceeded to declare martial law. Venizelos, in a letter to a friend in Canea, humorously remarked that martial law "will chiefly prove an embarrassment to the supporters of the High

Commissioner, because martial law can only be imposed in the places occupied by the international forces which are precisely the places over which the High Commissioner exercises authority.”¹

Without ammunition and without provisions, the position of the revolutionaries was becoming difficult. But Venizelos was not the man to impress the world with the spectacle of a revolution, only to let it come to nought. He had studied the Italian resurrection diligently. He knew that Italy had been served by three great men: Garibaldi, Cavour and Mazzini. He had studied their actions and tried to emulate them. But in his case he had to play the parts of all three. He was now anxious to gain time, and, above all, to impress the Powers that the pacification of Crete would be an arduous, costly and perilous task.

The Powers had all the lowland in their possession and the guns of their warships were covering the towns. There was still the possibility of using the weapon of reasoned appeal. An avalanche of confidential communications were sent from the headquarters of the revolutionaries to the Greek Foreign Minister in Athens. The movement was thus being put officially on record and, what was more, Venizelos intended to give to the Committee the appearance of responsible authority in spite of the fact that the revolutionaries held only a small part of the island.

Venizelos was anxious to show, in these despatches, that the revolution was not anti-dynastic, that it had no partisan ends to serve; that its purpose was simply to prevent the recurrence of administrative abuse and enact a new, more democratic Constitution, and that upon the withdrawal of Prince George he would oppose any High Commissioner who was not a Greek national, and would demand that a new High Commissioner be appointed from among the ex-Greek Premiers. More than a hundred of these documents reached the Greek Foreign Office, but not before every word they contained was made known by interception to the Powers. Venizelos intended it to be so. He saw that by holding out, the revolution would ultimately collapse. By this method, at least there could be an honest way to salvation!

In this indirect and roundabout way the Powers came to know

¹ G. Papantonaki: *Op. cit.*, p. 191.

that the "uncompromising brigand" had certain legitimate grievances. He was not merely a difficult, deluded idealist. He and his associates had a definite programme. Instead of being anarchists "they were the only authority which stood between Crete and anarchy."

The Powers sent their emissaries to start negotiations with the rebels. Eventually agreement was reached. The Revolutionary Committee insisted that the rebels should be amnestied, including those who were accused of attacking the *gendarmerie*—a point which the Powers were slow in granting—and that the right of the Cretan people to possess an army should be respected. On November 14 they surrendered.

After eight months the revolution came to an end. Its immediate results were practically nil. Prince George was still in the saddle, and the international forces were still on the island. As a political move, on the other hand, it was a master stroke. It demonstrated the unity of the Cretan people, their ardour for liberty, and made out of local parliamentary strife a first-class European question. It demonstrated the inability of the Powers to enforce their will, and succeeded in reducing by half their objection towards union with Greece. Autocracy was beaten, and the way was open for reform.

Prince George, isolated and despised, was forced to resign. He sailed from the island towards the end of September (24, 1906). The victory of Venizelos over his royal rival was now complete. The Powers accepted certain of his proposals, particularly those relating to the functions of the High Commissioner. A letter which the Powers forwarded to the King of Greece at the time read as follows:—

"The Protecting Powers, in order to manifest their desire to take into account as far as possible the aspirations of the Cretan people, and to recognise in a practical manner the interest which his Hellenic Majesty must always take in the prosperity of Crete, are in accord to propose to his Majesty that hereafter, whenever the Post of High Commissioner of Crete shall become vacant, his Majesty, after confidential consultations with the representatives of the Powers at Athens, will designate a candidate capable of exercising the mandate of the Powers in this island."

The King nominated, and the Powers approved, M. Zaimes, an ex-premier, to the post of High Commissioner. M. Zaimes arrived in Crete on October 1, 1906. Turkey protested against what was virtually a step towards the destruction of her suzerainty, but she refrained from any action because what was happening in Crete had been sanctioned by the Powers. In 1897 things were different. France and England were then antagonistic to each other, and Russia was suspicious of Britain and Britain equally suspicious of Russia. But now France and Britain were Allies and Great Britain and Russia were negotiating an agreement. Constantinople was forced to accept this development and consented that her suzerainty over Crete should be symbolised in the future by a cast-iron flag planted on an island in Suda Bay!

The new High Commissioner was a man of Liberal sentiments. With his advent a new era was inaugurated. His first task was to set up a Constitutional Committee to elaborate a new and more democratic Constitution, by curtailing the powers of the Highest Officer. Venizelos was the principal member of the Committee and found himself in complete accord with M. Zaimes. Meanwhile, public opinion changed noticeably in favour of Venizelos.

He emerged from the Therisso revolt as a national figure. For almost twenty years his life had been one of unsystematic, unplanned development. His actions had been mostly unpremeditated, and he had failed to show clearly in advance the course he intended to follow to liberate his country. Perhaps this would have been expecting too much. A man cannot plan his career. He can only play with the ebb and flow of circumstances, wait patiently and act quickly at the opportune moment. But this, though it may be true for any person whose career begins and blossoms under normal conditions, hardly fits with the pattern of the revolutionary. And Venizelos was pre-eminently a revolutionary, and styled himself such. So far, his revolutionism was devoid of everything revolutionary—except union with Greece, which was revolutionary to the extent that it represented the overthrowing of the Sultan's sovereignty and the irritating protection of the Powers—and neither Greece nor Crete stood to gain any particular good. It cost Greece a war,

entailing losses of frontier, an indemnity and European control of her finances. To Crete, it brought a continuous state of turmoil, great loss of life and property and in the end administration from Athens without the safeguard of local self-government. For Venizelos himself, it won the reputation of a leader, brought out his genius as a tactician diplomatist capable of playing skilfully with delay and threats, and as a first-class negotiator.

Only a political career was now open for him to follow. He was a man of forty-three; part of his hair and his beard white; bespectacled; civil-mannered and silver-tongued, with the power of expounding his ideas in terms which would confound an opponent. He had a manner of talking which gave the impression of sincerity and deep conviction. His conversation was smooth and persuasive, and his gestures restrained. Behind it all was an active brain, stored with legal lore and endowed with profound learning. His armoury was complete. His gifts marked him out for distinction.

* * *

In Athens, Prince George devoted his time to vilifying his opponent among the Court circles and through the medium of the monarchical Press. He harped on Venizelos's alleged anti-religious activities (during the Therissos affair the Cretan bishops, at the behest of the Prince, excommunicated Venizelos). He was held up as an atheist, a disciple of the German, Haeckel. Venizelos was nothing if not religious, indeed, to an unusual degree in one so intelligent. Atheism applied to him was a stupid fabrication. It helped to cultivate among the Royal family a suspicion, almost hatred, of the Cretan leader. This may explain the ultimate suspicion of King Constantine ten years later for the man who had opposed his brother.

M. Zaimes, on the other hand, a sober, unambitious politician, profited from the mistakes of his predecessor. After the elections, out of which the Liberal Party emerged victorious, Venizelos was entrusted with the formation of a Ministry. The High Commissioner left all administrative power in the hands of the Prime Minister, and he himself toured the capitals of Europe in order to win favour in high places for Crete.

For two years Venizelos was given the opportunity to prove his ability as a constructive statesman. He reorganised the judicial and police system, and created a Cretan military force under the command of Greek officers. His task was not easy. Although he enjoyed a decisive majority, he had to face bitter opposition and had to control his followers, in their attempts to trample on the rights of the Turkish minority.

On the whole, his administration proved better than any previous one, and by the end of two years, the island was enjoying unparalleled calm and comfortable prosperity. In the diplomatic field, he persistently sought to win the sympathy of the Powers, and the erstwhile enemies eventually consented to withdraw their forces as the protection of the island could now be entrusted to the local military units.

Office and success did not turn his head. He lived during this period in three small rooms and kept only one servant. His whole preoccupation was with the administration. Being questioned, many years later, by H. A. Gibbons concerning those two years of apparent lull, he replied that his memory yielded little concerning years when everything went well. "I was simply preparing for union with Greece," he said. "With the knowledge of the Powers I made the *gendarmerie*, the judicial and fiscal systems to conform as nearly as possible with Greek institutions. I had in mind to avoid another transitional period."

Things were evolving smoothly in Crete when in 1908 the world was staggered by the news that the Ottoman Empire had miraculously become a constitutional monarchy. Despotism was replaced by democracy. Liberalism, constitutionalism, were words familiar to the western ear! The macabre spectacle of massacres was a thing of the past. Had liberty asserted herself in Turkey?

The bloodless revolution of the Young Turks, their easy victory over the forces of Hamidism had been greeted with pleasure from every European capital, except St. Petersburg. Every country considered that a revitalised and strong Turkey would be a good ally in the coming war.

The Young Turks proclaimed that their purpose was to safeguard the Ottoman Empire from dismemberment and raise

Turkey to the status of a great Power. In short, their programme was one of ardent nationalism. The revolutionaries were mostly young people of the upper classes, educated in the West, from whence they brought into Turkey a mixture of ideas with the purpose of instilling new blood into the limbs of the "sick man of Europe." Their fight against the Sultan was not an indication that they were fighting against corruption and tyranny. On the contrary. Corruption and tyranny had for so long been the life and blood of Ottoman rule that even the new idealists could not escape their magical attraction. But the Sultan and his regime were barring the way to a new and vigorous Turkey. Therefore they had to be removed.

Turkish nationalism had donned the wig of freedom and the garb of constitutionalism. The Constitution did not distinguish between Moslem and Christian. Turk, Arab, Greek, Bulgar, and hereafter all Ottoman subjects were to enjoy equal rights, privileges and responsibilities. Everyone had the right to elect and be elected. In short, the kind of freedom expressed through the ballot box in Western Europe was introduced in the Ottoman Empire. Venizelos, though acknowledging the progressive form of the new regime, was sceptical about its ultimate working. "The transformation of the Turkish State into a constitutional monarchy," he wrote, "granting liberty and political equality to all the nationalities under its rule, is of interest not only to the Turkish State itself, which is saved from the undoubted ruin towards which it was heading, it is of interest not only to Hellenism, whose fate is indissolubly connected with this State, and to the different nationalities which live under its rule, but it is of vital importance to the whole of Europe, because it neutralises one question, the Eastern question, whose ominous complications the European people are viewing with agonising anxiety.

"Will the new Ottoman régime be able to respond to the hopes which it has aroused among all its constituent nationalities and among the civilised world in general? Will the race which, by virtue of its numerical superiority and on account of several historic factors, is ruling to-day, find that its salvation can be achieved by granting freedom and political equality to the

numerous nationalities under its rule? Will this idea become the property of the broad masses of the Turkish people? *Will the new régime be able to restrain nationalist excesses and avoid falling into the fatal illusion of attempting to assimilate the different nationalities?*¹

Venizelos's fears were not groundless. In a short space of time "the 'Young' Turks proved to be merely the 'old' Turk with a varnish of Parisian culture."

The first action of the Committee of Union and Progress (Young Turks) was to challenge the Powers by formally abolishing the capitulations and upsetting the formula of the Congress of Berlin. They demanded the return of detached territories on the ground that the flimsy justification of the safeguard of nationalities could not have any *raison d'être* with the granting of the Constitution. In order to avoid possible embarrassment, Austria-Hungary forestalled Constantinople by annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina and Prince Ferdinand declared Bulgaria a sovereign state and assumed the rank of the Tsar.

Three days later (October 8, 1908), fifteen thousand people assembled in the Champ de Mars in Crete and declared, in the absence of M. Zaimes, the office of the High Commissioner abolished, and demanded union with Greece. Venizelos spoke to the demonstrators. "Our revolution is peaceful and is not directed against the Powers. Its sole object is the final and irrevocable union of Crete with the Mother Country. Hereafter the Government will act in the name of the Hellenic Kingdom and the Assembly will be opened in the name of the King, the deputies qualifying by taking the oath of allegiance to the King."

A coalition Government was set up, with Venizelos as Prime Minister, which announced its intention of holding the island for the King of Greece until the act of union was officially recognised. Union was decreed by popular will, but the Powers objected. The international forces, though reduced, were still stationed in the island; the Powers now maintaining their troops on the pretext of safeguarding the Moslem minority. Venizelos pointed out the harmony existing between the two elements, and that so far the Government had proved efficient in maintaining order, and would continue to do so in the future. A reversal might

¹ *Keryx*, December 8, 1908.

creep in, he suggested, if the local Turks should refuse to accept the changed status of the island and strove to bring back the Ottoman rule.

On October 12, the Assembly legalised the decision of the demonstration. In a memorable speech, Venizelos analysed the conditions which led to that spontaneous eruption of Cretan national feeling. "If the brains and not the hearts," he said, "were always dictating the decisions of the people, the world would be different. But the promptings of reason are usually ignored by the strivings of the heart." He went on to explain that probably by sticking to the formula of the Powers things might fare better. "But as a result of the Austro-Hungarian deed and the Bulgarian defiance, it became imperative for us to take the course we did. Bulgaria by annexing Eastern Rumelia—where according to the Treaty of Berlin the Bulgars, Turks and Greeks enjoyed the same national rights, and where now, according to the avowed national principles of the ruling state, a steady process of Bulgarianisation of the inhabitants will be carried on—has upset the balance in the Balkans and Crete ought to be given to Greece as counterweight."

By the spring of 1909 the Young Turk Government had shown its mettle. Their principles when put to the test proved to be far more reactionary and sanguinary than those of their predecessors. Their intention was to assimilate the different nationalities into one Turkish whole. The Sublime Porte, once its internal power was established, declared that she was ready to resume her full sovereignty over Crete at all costs.

Had the Greek Government acted earlier when the new Turkish Government was in the throes of internal reorganisation and at grips with Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, Crete would have been part of Greece. By now the Young Turks were in a position to make a show of force and it was easier to bluff and bully Greece than the Dual Monarchy. The Cretans answered the threats of Constantinople by making all officials take the oath of allegiance to the King of Greece and by sending appeals from the insular courts to Athens.

The Powers were once more placed in difficulties. Germany was playing a clever diplomatic game both at Athens and

Constantinople. Could they leave the solution of the problem to the clever hand of Berlin? Undoubtedly not. On July 26, 1909, the remaining international forces were withdrawn, four warships being left behind "stationed permanently in Cretan waters to protect the Moslems and safeguard the supreme right of the Ottoman Empire." Venizelos acclaimed the withdrawal of the garrisons by saying that "after seven centuries the soil of Crete is not under the heel of foreign soldiers," but before withdrawing their forces the Powers impressed upon the Assembly that the arrangement was provisional and that the status of the island should not be discussed until a more opportune moment.

The wheel of European diplomacy was moving very slowly. Turkey was a vortex of diplomatic collusions. Each party had its own interests to push and yet each party was bound to others by pacts, treaties and alliances which made concerted action at once necessary and ineffective. Sir Edward Grey, in the House of Commons, tried to cajole the Cretans by promising that once all the other burning questions had been regulated, a way out for the Cretans could easily be found. But the ruling party in Constantinople, supported by an influential section of the French Press in the pay of Turkey, was becoming more aggressive and intransigent. It protested to London and Paris about alleged violation of Turkish sovereignty. By order of their Governments, the Consuls in Canea impressed the Executive Committee that the solution of the Cretan question could not be effected by unilateral action. It was bound up with the general Balkan problem, and because of its delicacy and its implications, it ought to follow, but not to precede, the other problems. Venizelos summoned the Powers to state their intention categorically. He was, by now, revolted by the muddling incompetence of the Western democracies, and he was striving hard to find a formula which would enable him to take the fate of his country in his own hands.

He intimated to the Powers that with the withdrawal of their troops he would hoist the Greek flag on the island, as otherwise Crete would be left at the mercy of Turkey. Though verbally he defied the Powers, with the withdrawal of the international

forces, he opposed the idea advocated by a section of nationalist extremists for the hoisting of the Greek flag. His efforts were in vain. Three days after the evacuation, the Greek flag was flying over Canea. The Executive Committee appealed to the people for prudence and caution, because support of the extremists would mean a national catastrophe; by all means Crete should avoid coming into collision with the Powers. The opponents of the provisional administration ignored the wishes of the Executive Committee and proceeded to place a guard of citizen volunteers round the flag to protect it.

The flag incident provided Turkey with her opportunity. Her attitude stiffened at once. The Turkish Minister in Athens demanded from the Greek Government "a written disavowal of the Cretan agitation for union and a further repudiation of any such design on her part," otherwise he would depart on unlimited leave. Greece was in a state bordering anarchy, bankrupt, disorganised and practically unarmed, and divided between two parties—the war and peace parties. Premier Theotokes was forced to resign before even Turkey adopted a more rigid attitude and Rhalles in office replied to the Turkish note that the Greek Government had nothing to do with Crete. But the Turkish Government was not satisfied. A fortnight later, a new note dispatched to Athens observed mockingly that Greece had nothing to do with Crete, but Greek officers in disguise were in Macedonia trying to foment rebellion against the Porte. She demanded instant disavowal of all alleged subversive activities. Her note was couched in the terms of an ultimatum. Greece, staggered, appealed to the Powers to prevent war, and sent a new answer to Constantinople reiterating her decision to abstain from any move which might be considered prejudicial to Turkish Sovereignty.

In Crete, the Executive Committee, unable to remove the flag in face of popular opposition, resigned. A new Executive Committee was appointed, composed of three judicial persons. Europe was once more faced with the old problem, and the allied fleets appeared in Suda Bay. An order for the hauling down of the flag was issued, but none dared do it. A company of marines were then landed and they cut down the flagstaff.

The bellicose attitude of Turkey towards Greece was summed up by Venizelos as the logical culmination of the trend of Turkish militarist mentality. But it reflected at the same time, the position to which Greece was reduced by the maladministration of the last half century and particularly since the Greco-Turkish war of 1897. He interpreted the Turkish notes as an impudent provocation to Europe, and as foreshadowing an attempt of Islamic aggression against Christendom, "an attempt which must be crushed in time in the supreme interests of civilisation."¹ This article is important in so far as it represents the first public criticism by Venizelos of the incompetence of Greek administration. So far, he had refrained from attacking the Greek Government in its internal administration, considering such an action a sacrilege. What was the reason for departing from his strictly observed discretion towards Greek politics? It was because by now he had other and greater ambitions. He had made up his mind to enter the Greek Parliament and wanted to prepare his way in advance by attacking those in authority. He knew that a revolutionary ferment was animating the military in Athens and also that his stock among their leaders was high. Another aspect now brought to the forefront was the development of Greco-Turkish struggle into one between Christianity and Islamism. The Cross against the Crescent! Ten years later, Venizelos was to be the self-styled crusader of Christendom against Islam.

Diplomatic relations between Greece and Turkey were not severed, but Turkey imposed a boycott on Greek goods and Greek ships. The economy of the country, never very sound, was severely affected by this measure. Diplomatic humiliation and the economic stranglehold of the boycott proved too much for the discontented Greek army. A *coup d'état* by the "Military League" took place on August 28, and the King found himself face to face with a dictatorship. The League did not declare against the monarchy. It demanded a drastic reorganisation of the army and a thorough reform of the political system. Its revolutionary council was composed of officers, lacking in political experience and united only by a common distrust of the

¹ *Keryx*, July 20-August 11.

incompetence of the Danish dynasty which had ruled Greece for nearly half a century. They had no programme, save a demand for the modernisation of the armed forces: no immediate aims, except a vague notion of political reform and the wresting of the army from the command of the Princes. As regards the rest, they let time and chance take their course!

From Crete, Venizelos gave his blessing to the military adventurers, but his admiration was tempered with some misgivings as to the administrative capacity of the military leaders. "If the political rot," he wrote, "produced by decades of administrative wantonness is so advanced that the work of reconstruction through the present political parties and by legal means is impossible, the Military League, by placing its moral and material powers at the service of the noblest of purposes, should impose, if necessary, a temporary dictatorship for a term strictly defined in advance, and convoke a national assembly to decide how the country is to be governed in future."

With the passing of time, the effectiveness of the League was coming to public notice. Militarists are usually notorious intriguers and possess the powers *par excellence* of pulling the wires behind the scenes, but once they step into the limelight of leadership, they reveal their feet of clay. The old politicians waited in the background, ready to step in at the inevitable collapse of the League. The officers, on the other hand, were anxious to find someone in whose hand to place power. Meanwhile, unfortunate Greece had fallen from one maladministration to another. The old parties, rotten with corruption, whose leaders' names savoured of every scandal, were discredited. The "soldiers" were just another gang of adventurers, and job-seekers, and equally detestable. Nothing was in order in the Greek State; Parliament could not work; the countryside was overrun by bandits, the peasants were ruined in a country where everything round them was coming down in ruins, abroad was the economic boycott and on the borders of Thessaly Constantinople was amassing new armies. Mr. Dillon, in an article published in the *Contemporary Review*, in January 1910, remarked, "that these chaotic conditions could be averted if the revolution was fortunate enough to enlist from the outset the services of a strong man who, by sheer weight

of his intellect, could lead the public. And such a man could be none else," he wrote, "than the Cretan Leader, the revolutionary, the reformer, the conscientious worker, Eleutherios Venizelos." This article, translated and published in the Athenian newspaper *Acropolis*, forced the Military League to turn its eyes definitely towards Crete.

An officer named Kontaratos was delegated to get in touch with Venizelos, and to extend an invitation for him to go to Athens. Venizelos accepted. In a letter to the Military League answering their invitation, he refused to bind himself to any definite promise or undertaking. He intimated that his journey to Athens was for the purpose of studying the position at first hand, and asked that his coming should not be made known to the public.¹

On January 23, 1910, Venizelos arrived in Athens. The King and the Court showed signs of anxiety—they saw in him an enemy. The elderly politicians were hostile to the newcomer—their positions and privileges were at stake. Venizelos at once expressed his views at a full meeting of the members of the Military League. In his opinion the military insurrection of August did not follow the right lines. Though the League was from the very outset master of the situation, it "did not demolish or erect anything." Instead of taking up a radical attitude, changing the political regime and establishing a new one to which the revolution could entrust the carrying out of its work, it, unfortunately, assumed a chronic character, with the result that the army alienated itself from its professional duties and, by directly interfering in politics, had destroyed its discipline. Now, five months after the insurrection, which had as its aim the reorganisation of the country, the state was, from the military standpoint, in a worse position than before. But if the insurrection had created nothing stable because it failed to destroy anything, at the same time it had deprived the authorities, which it formally respected, of any real power. Thus it was gradually and steadily creating a state of political anarchy wherein political reaction lurked ready to attack, and when the increasing public discontent had accentuated the differences within the League itself it would inescapably lead to the League's ignominious

¹ *Memoirs of N. Zorbas*, p. 64.

collapse after which the corrupt régime would regain its power.¹ He proceeded to suggest as a solution, the declaration of the League as a lawful administration with the provision that it would withdraw from office after a responsible government, enjoying full authority, was instituted. This very ingenious suggestion does not commend the political foresight of Venizelos. A military caste, entrenched in power, consolidating and legalising its position and then handing over power to a civil government! The world had seen enough examples of this to know what is in store. Either the military stays there until it is bloodily ejected by another coup, or the Government to which it yields its authority will be its puppet and mouthpiece, and, eventually, has to be violently overthrown.

Venizelos's programme, though not explicitly stated at that meeting, was the establishment of a new political party, or a working coalition which would derive its authority from the Military League. He had in view the convocation of a Revisionist Assembly. The Military League, when presented with this formula, agreed, and Venizelos sounded the different heads of the political parties on the matter, and had an audience with the King. Not only the King, but also Theotokes and the Prime Minister Mavromichales, the nominee of the League, opposed the suggestion. The King expressed to Venizelos his legitimate fears that no democratically elected Government could function properly if it was to be subservient to the army. Venizelos answered that the League would be dissolved the day the National Assembly met. Still the King remained doubtful. "I hope Venizelos will soon be hanged from the mast of a battleship," was his private comment.

Failing to arrive at an understanding, Venizelos notified Colonel Zormpas of his desire to depart as his mission had come to an end.

The League, apprehensive of its powers to last, was horror-stricken at the prospect of not being able to disentangle itself from the mess which it had created. A meeting was hastily convened and Venizelos was approached and persuaded to

¹ Reported in *Keryx*, January 27, 1910, quoted by G. Papantonaki, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

prolong his stay. Negotiations were carried on more insistently by both Venizelos and Colonel Zormpas. Persuasions and threats of military action forced the King to convene a political council of all the heads of the political parties within a week. Still there was no agreement, the opposition this time coming from the King himself, who was reluctant to violate the Constitution in any way, the last citadel of his authority. The crisis was growing worse, and the Crown found itself menaced by the armed forces.

The Damoclean sword of a new military insurrection, more radical and determined this time, was hanging over the King. So, beating a tactical retreat, he yielded and called on M. Dragoumes to form a coalition Government which would undertake to convoke a National Revisionist Assembly. The new Government took the oath on February 2, 1910.

Venizelos then returned to Crete. To a correspondent of an Italian paper he said, "I am hopeful. I have a boundless confidence in the vitality of Hellenism and I see emerging from the Assembly a better and more organised Greece, dedicated to its fate and civilising mission."¹

¹ G. Papantonaki, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

PART II



CHAPTER IV

HIS FIRST PREMIERSHIP

“Within that land was many a malcontent,
Who cursed the tyranny to which he bent;
That soil full many a wringing despot saw,
Who work’d his wantonness in form of law
Long war without and frequent broil within
Had made a path for blood and giant sin,
That waited but a signal to begin
New havoc, such as civil discord blends,
Which knows no neuter, owns but foes or friends.”

—*Byron.*

“The stability of a kingdom will depend upon the power of the king being kept within moderate bounds.”—*Aristotle.*

CONDITIONS in Greece, for the time being at least, became normal. Venizelos’s success added to his prestige enormously and he became overnight the hero of the popular Press. From now onwards he was pointed out as the leader of Hellenism, and for a quarter of a century this was to be his title. How that came about defies the understanding of the critical reader. Nothing he had so far done justified in any way the leadership of a nation. He did not expound a theory, nor did he put forward an alluring picture of the historical mission of Hellenism. He inherited a tradition which he did not test in any scientific light. No treatise, no serious work, no articles he had written or speeches he had delivered or work he had done would have placed him in such a position as to be the accredited leader of a nation out to achieve its goal. Although his articles were numerous and his speeches long, there was nowhere the firm foundation of any plan, aim or purpose which could place him in a position of distinct uniqueness.

His deeds, though considerable, were not so dazzling as to raise him to that pinnacle of eminence.

If Venizelos had been only a Prime Minister and nothing more, these reflections would be superfluous. But he was not. From the time he intervened in Athens on behalf of the Military League he became, in the eyes of the people, the national leader. And such a contingency necessarily invites questioning and probing into its causes and origins. To understand this position one must bear in mind conditions in Greece—a small peasant state, in a condition of chronic bankruptcy, passing from one humiliation to another, cowering before Turkey, under the heel of the Powers, leaderless, pauperised, desperate. There were politicians and parties, but they belonged to that famous school of corruption, personal enrichment and aggrandisement. There was a King, but he spent most of his time in pleasure trips to Europe. There was a Parliament, where a miserable phalanx of political pygmies indulged in the wildest excesses of personal recrimination and insults. Everything was hopeless and the general atmosphere was one of despair.

At this peculiar psychological moment Venizelos appeared. He at least could speak his thoughts and had the courage of his convictions. He did not say a lot, nor did he try to pour down the throats of the public lumps of indigestible theories, but what he said was enough. What he did was praiseworthy. In such a condition, a nation in bondage and a man in the chains of an illusion joined forces. That the result would be, as in all those cases of whirlwind love-matches of which Nietzsche has spoken, at times perfect happiness and at times violent quarrels, was in the very nature of the act. No man in modern Greece has been more loved or more hated than Venizelos.

* * *

The election of March 1910 in Crete strengthened the Venizelist Party considerably, but its majority was contested by the combined opposition of all the other parties. For a time Crete was without a unified working Government. Later, after some violent incidents between Greeks and Turks, many deputies sided with Venizelos, as a man of authority was obviously required to under-

take the task of administration and to handle the thorny question of Cretan relations with Europe and the Porte. Venizelos was then able to form a Government.

The opening sessions of the new Assembly were accompanied by stormy scenes in the traditional Greek manner. The extreme nationalist wing demanded that all public servants and deputies should take the oath of allegiance to King George of Greece, in accordance with the adopted resolution of two years previously. The Ottoman deputies refused, and submitted a resolution of protest to the Presidium of the Assembly which, when handed in, was torn up by a Greek deputy. Venizelos was almost alone in urging that the Moslem deputies should be excused from taking the oath as they were unable to associate themselves with their Christian fellow countrymen in a *coup d'état* which ran counter to their aspirations, and that they should be allowed to take their seats as long as they would publicly declare their recognition of the autonomous régime. The counsel of Venizelos prevailed and, for the moment, the question appeared to be solved.

However, it was soon reopened by the Moslem deputies. In a second resolution of protest they not only refused to acknowledge the autonomous régime, but demanded the restoration of the Constitution in force prior to 1897. Venizelos knew that the deputies acted so under instructions from Constantinople. An incident was all that was required for Turkey to press her demand for intervention. In order to counteract it, the Greeks at once proceeded to change the Assembly into a Constituent Assembly, and Venizelos was elected Chairman of the new Executive Council. The Powers threatened to intervene if the Turkish deputies were deprived of their seats. Venizelos, alluding to the démarche of the Powers, pronounced the following words in the Assembly: "No one can deny the gravity of the situation as it is foreshadowed in the warning of the Powers. If our Ottoman colleagues would come to the Assembly and state that as they constitute a minority whose status is under the special protection of the Powers, and because their aspirations are not identical with ours that they cannot follow us in our action of September 1908, but that they adhere to the régime internationally recognised, I am of the opinion that we ought to excuse them from taking the

oath. . . . But our Moslem fellow-citizens, as stated in their second memorandum of protest, refuse even to recognise the autonomy of the island and the evolution which that autonomy has undergone in the last ten years, with the resultant closer bonds of unity between Greece and Crete, and demand the restoration of the pre-1897 régime, *i.e.*, the Verovits autonomy.” He went on to say that as long as the Turkish deputies remained the tools of those in power in Constantinople, and coveted the present freedom of the island, there was a danger of the two elements coming into an open struggle. He admonished the Cretan people to preserve their calm and refuse to be dragged into attacks on their Moslem fellow citizens by the demagogic of hot-headed Greek nationalists. “Such an attack is a trap, and those¹ responsible for it are the enemies of our cause. When I say enemies to our cause, I do not mean the Moslem citizens; I consider them to be the unwitting tools of Constantinople. They are, gentlemen, nothing else but victims of historical conditions which they did not create.”¹ He finished his speech by saying that as long as the Moslem deputies were coming to obstruct the work of the Assembly, they would be refused admission. A resolution was then passed forbidding them admission until the temporary régime had been given legal status.

The Powers responded quickly with an ultimatum to the Assembly saying that no Moslem officials were to be prevented from discharging their duties or deprived of pay because they had not sworn allegiance to the King of Greece. If, for the same reason, the ultimatum continued, Turkish deputies were excluded from the Assembly, the Powers reserved the right to take the necessary measures. To make the threat good, additional warships were despatched to Crete. Turkey demanded protection of the Moslems and hinted that she was now ready to effect a definite settlement of the Cretan question. The Powers answered that by increasing their naval forces, they had “given proof of their intention and desire to safeguard the sovereign rights of the Sultan,” but as regards the second question, Turkey ought to address herself to all six Powers which were signatories to the Treaty of Berlin.

¹ Quoted in *Keryx*, May 14-27, 1910.

Encouraged by Berlin and Vienna, Turkey took a strong line. She declared that she intended to continue the boycott of Greek goods and again began to mass troops on the frontier of Thessaly. The protecting Powers, alarmed by the rapid turn of events, presented an ultimatum to the Cretan Assembly, declaring that if it would not yield on the question of the Moslem deputies, they would land troops in the principal ports, seize the Customs receipts, and make formal occupation of the island. Before complying, Venizelos asked the Powers what they meant "by the intention to safeguard the sovereign rights of the Sultan," contained in their note to Turkey. The answer was another and more direct ultimatum. Warships steamed into the Cretan ports, decks cleared for action, and the final negotiations took place under the shadow of their guns. Venizelos, faced with the dire prospect of another invasion, yielded to the demands of the Powers. "Any other policy than that of submission," he stated in the Assembly, "is a policy of suicide." He meant that the occupation of the Powers was likely to be followed by a fresh demand from Turkey for participation in the occupation, ostensibly for the protection of the Turkish minority. He urged the acceptance of the ultimatum of the Powers and when this had been accepted and the policy of the Executive Council was approved, the Assembly rose for the summer vacation. Venizelos then travelled to Switzerland for a holiday.

* * *

The journey to Switzerland was a piece of political subterfuge. In Greece elections were declared for August 21, 1910. Meanwhile Turkey, in order to obviate any complications over the Cretan question, made it clear that if any Cretan deputies were admitted to the Greek Chamber she would consider it as an act of war. Venizelos was a "Greek Citizen" and his father's naturalisation as a citizen of the kingdom was cited for confirmation. Apparently there were many anomalies in that. How was it that a Greek citizen was deputy in a local parliament of the Ottoman Empire (the pre-1897 parliament)? Turkey formally protested, but after several diplomatic *pourparlers* accepted the cited documents as valid. She was thus given the opportunity of

ridding herself of Venizelos from Crete. In the coming elections, the Military League nominated him as a candidate for Attica, and, in order to avoid making the complications over his naturalisation more difficult, he thought it advisable to travel. In Switzerland and Western Europe he met and conferred with his friends without arousing suspicion. He also took the opportunity of seeing many ministers and persons of importance, and asked them what would be their attitude in the case of his possible election to the Greek Parliament. The impression he made on them was favourable, and he felt confident that he could count, if not on their support, at least on their acquiescence.

The 1910 elections were fought with the usual bitterness. Athens was agog; the name of Venizelos dominated the elections. His return was a certainty and the old parliamentary hands who had laboured painfully up the hierarchies of party bureaucracy viewed with dismay this man "from abroad" who was rising to power at a bound over their heads. The instinct of self-preservation asserted itself. A united phalanx of apprehensive ministerial job-seekers and parliamentary lords began to see an enemy in Venizelos. If they did not express it, they must have whispered the word—usurper. And there lies part of the clue to the fury which raged round his name for a quarter of a century.

On August 21, while in Lausanne, Venizelos received a telegram announcing his election to Parliament.

The New National Assembly which was elected consisted of three hundred and fifty-eight members; one hundred and ninety of them belonged to the Coalition Party formed by M. Theotokes and Rhalles. Forty-five deputies from Thessaly formed the Agrarian Party, pledged to the gradual expropriation of the Feudal Thessalian landowners in the interests of the peasant cultivators. Ten Socialists were elected for the first time. There was also a body of eighty independent deputies, representing the extreme wing of the Military League whose chief demand was that the Assembly should be "Constituent" and not "Revisionist." Among the elected, there were four Cretans, apart from Venizelos. The Porte protested at once against their election. Venizelos and one of his colleagues were able to disarm the indignation of

Turkey by proving Greek citizenship, but the three others declined their seats in order not to embarrass Greece.

On the day following the elections, the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna published an article in which it suggested that from now on a name would dominate Greek political life. "To the bearer of this name are extended the invitation and the power to govern the country in which he was only temporarily a guest and which he served by his voluntary counsel. Great things are expected from him, and he is destined to play a dramatic part in inaugurating a new era in the history of his country. The man to whom yesterday's elections have given that supreme confidence is Venizelos."¹ Europe outside Greece had already formed an opinion about Venizelos—a better one than Greece herself.

Venizelos on his return to Crete resigned the Presidency of the Provisional Government and designated M. Maris, a tried friend and collaborator, as his successor. A deputation of Members of Parliament and notabilities sailed from Greece to accompany him to Athens. His Cretan supporters were in dismay, for they still needed his services, but Venizelos reminded them that the only solution of the Cretan question lay in a strong Greece and his purpose was to make Greece strong. He asked his friends to have confidence in him and in what he was going to do, even if his actions would at times appear to them "puzzling and incomprehensible."

On September 17 the city of Canea offered Venizelos a farewell banquet. Speeches were delivered eulogising his work, dwelling on the past, bringing out touching reminiscences and praising the fine team work which had so far pulled the gallant island through. Then Venizelos rose to reply. He had spent time preparing his speech in advance. Times were hard and critical. Hope for Crete lay only in one direction, that of Greece. Venizelos started, "My dear fellow citizens—" and could say no more!

All those present, in their recording of the incident agreed that Venizelos was deeply moved. Emotion choked him and he could not speak. His opponents dismissed it as a piece of stage-acting to impress himself more deeply on his followers.

¹ *Neue Freie Presse*, August 22, 1910, quoted by G. Papantonaki, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

Grief has been an effective means of endearment among the emotional Greeks since the days of Sophocles. Apart from the fact that tears and artificial emotion are necessary weapons to the politicians of Greece, this might have had a wider significance. Venizelos had worked out his speech; he knew quite well what he was going to say. To promise them union with Greece? To arouse them by a denunciation of Turkey? To put the Cretan question in its proper place, as a part of those extensive horizons including the great world of Hellenism, and demand a religious crusade against Mohammedanism? In all probability he intended to touch upon all these subjects. The world was listening. Had he done so, he would have committed a major political blunder. Now, when he was about to drop the mantle of the rebel and put on the frock-coat of the administrator, caution and tact were the requisites. It would have been folly to rouse the suspicion and the indignation of the Ottoman rulers, now, when in all probability he would have a place in the Greek cabinet and therefore a voice in the affairs of Greece. Probably last minutes' thoughts prevented him from attempting a fruitless provocation. Tears and emotion were good saviours; he used them so and easily surmounted a difficult situation.

On September 18, Venizelos arrived in Piræus, where he was greeted by a gigantic demonstration of supporters and admirers. So big were the crowds in Athens that he had difficulty in getting to his hotel. Summoned to the balcony, he made his first speech to the people.

"I shall collaborate with those who want to lift Greece morally and materially to the level of modern states and to make her the chief factor of civilisation and progress in the Orient," he cried. The national *amour-propre* of the people was spurred. The ovation which greeted these words was terrific. "Greece needs reform. There must be a national effort against the corrupt and incompetent past. The fundamental institution of Greece, the Monarchy, must be strengthened in order to preserve the continuity of the State and ensure constitutional reform. The Assembly must be 'Revisionist' and not 'Constituent'."

An angry cry went up from the crowd, "Constituent," "Constituent"!

When the tumult had subsided, Venizelos said calmly, "Revisionist." "Constituent," came back the reply.

"I said Revisionist," answered Venizelos.

"Constituent! Down with the Danes," answered the crowd. After more than ten minutes of this, Venizelos thundered, shaking both his fists at his audience, "The Chamber must be Revisionist. We have been elected for certain purposes and have contracted obligations towards those who chose us. The Covenant is definite. It behoves us, therefore, to fulfil those purposes and to carry out the terms of the Covenant. The Assembly elected to revise the Constitution cannot make a new Constitution."

The result was disappointment. The people expected to hear the famous rebel thundering against the Monarchy and constituted authority. They wanted to feel the breeze of that indomitable spirit which had swept over the Cretan hills for a dozen years. Instead they were confronted with a man who was out to save what he was practically called to abolish. Their feelings, as well as their aims, were vague. What they yearned for was a policy; what they demanded was a leader. The general, but subdued, applause, which greeted the ending of the speech showed that Venizelos, if not enthusiastically acclaimed, was at least accepted as the leader.

Venizelos also stupefied his supporters of the Military League. This man from nowhere, pushed by them on to the stage of Greek politics, had the audacity to act contrarily to their wishes. But by doing that, Venizelos manœuvred himself into an independent position. He had no party and expected to find a following among the leaderless mass of the deputies. He was also aware that the anti-dynastic feeling was confined to Athens and that the rural population was either disinterested or supported the throne. Undoubtedly the Court and the elder politicians wanted him to fall into the anti-dynastic trap in the hope of discrediting him and eventually using the authority in their hands to cut short his career. But what the Military League had failed to understand was that the discontent of which it had made itself the spearhead, was essentially economic. Greece was preponderantly an agricultural country and could not support her people by agriculture. Industrial development was stemmed by the

international control of her finances and the administrative system was undermined by sterile factional strife. Economic desperation led masses of the people to emigrate. The merchant class, timid and anxious for its own interests, had its money in foreign securities. Greek products were boycotted in Turkey. Until Greece was strong enough to have at least some kind of industry of her own, to develop her resources and reform the army and navy and by some system of alliances be able to stave off the Turkish threat, there could be no hope of remedying her ills.

Two days before his arrival in Athens, the Independent Party to which Venizelos was supposed to be affiliated caused a riot in the Chamber by endeavouring to prevent the deputies from taking the oath prescribed by the Constitution. They demanded that the oath should be taken collectively "as a constituent body deriving its mandate from the sovereign people." The Government had to call upon the military to restore order. In such an atmosphere of unbridled vehemence Venizelos made his political debut, and his first action was to repudiate the principal object for which his supporters were striving. It must be said that the "Independents" did not favour any form of Republican régime. What they had in mind was a working political party deriving its authority from the Military League, with the High Command as the titular head of the State.

Premier Dragoumes was unable to deal with the situation and during three weeks of intermittent word-battles, he failed to present a programme or advocate a policy, and was forced to resign. The King was averse to calling on Venizelos to form a ministry. He tried every conceivable combination. All failed on the stumbling-block of the Military League. When, on October 15, the King finally sounded Venizelos for the first time as to the possibility of his forming a Government, Venizelos, as an answer, produced from his pocket a detailed programme which he handed to the King with the words, "Your Majesty, in five years I will regenerate Greece." In three days' time (October 18, 1910) he was Prime Minister of Greece.

Parliamentary history presents no analogy much less a parallel to this. A man who had spent nearly the whole forty-five years

of his life outside the country which, apart from his student days, he had visited at intervals and only for short periods, who had been a Member of Parliament for only eight weeks and whose nationality even was questionable, was called upon to assume control of public affairs.

Venizelos gave the Portfolio of Foreign Affairs to M. Gryparis, Greek Minister in Constantinople, thus showing that one of his foremost desires was to cultivate good relations with Turkey. On the 19th, he addressed the Chamber. In his speech, he pronounced in favour of the revision of the non-fundamental articles of the Constitution, and elaborated the measures to be taken for the economic alleviation of the countryside, and general Greek regeneration. The old reactionary parliamentary parties, while abstaining from any serious criticism of the Government's programme, tried to create a furore by raising the alleged decree for dissolving the Chamber which the Prime Minister had secured from the King in the event of the majority of the deputies voting against him. Venizelos stopped the discussion and asked point blank for a vote of confidence. The demand came sharply. The old parliamentary leaders refused to accept the challenge, preferring to obstruct the business of the Assembly by resorting to the old Greek parliamentary trick of absenting themselves and their parties from Parliament and thus preventing a quorum, which, according to the Constitution of 1864, required the presence of half of the members of the House. On October 23 one of Venizelos's supporters moved a vote of confidence in the Government, whereupon Rhalles and Mavromichales with their followers, left the Chamber, followed by a number of Independents who disapproved of the moderation of the Prime Minister. The remainder were short by twenty members from making a quorum and the motion automatically fell.

The Prime Minister tendered his resignation at once to the King. As soon as this was made known, the Trades Guilds and the University Students convened a protest meeting. Ten thousand people marched through the streets, shouting against the old reactionary parties, to the meeting place in the Square of the Constitution, where a resolution was passed and sent to the King, urging him not to accept the resignation of the Government.

The demonstrators then marched to the house of Venizelos and reassured him of their support. This action had immediate results. The resignation was refused and the following day Venizelos appeared in the Chamber and demanded a vote "expressing the complete acquiescence of the Chamber in the declarations of the Government." The return of some of the Independents and the adhesion of the Theotokes party gave the Government a vote of confidence of two hundred and eight for and thirty-one against.

The "old gang" represented by Rhalles and Mavromichales again absented themselves. Venizelos did not gloat over this temporary victory. On the contrary, he saw in the tactics of his opponents an attempt to obstruct every action of his Government. The Constitution guaranteed them full liberty of sabotage. He saw, too, that by their tactics they were discrediting themselves before the electorate and in order to make that "supposed" existence of discontent against them a reality, he launched a campaign against the "Reactionaries" through his Press. The ground was thus being prepared for new elections. When Venizelos saw that the stock of his opponents was low, he advised the King to dissolve the Assembly. It was a bold and brazen step. His Government had received a vote of confidence and constitutionally there was no cause for dissolution. Only the King, by exercising his Royal prerogative, could dissolve the Assembly. How he came to yield to the advice of his Minister is a mystery, in view of the fact that two weeks earlier he had done everything in his power to keep Venizelos out of office. But the Cretan was no fool in his political dealings. His arguments were plausible and in the background loomed as an additional argument the menace of the Military League! The King, an old person, whose fifty years of rule was conspicuous for its ineffectuality, gave in. The Chamber was dissolved and December 24 was fixed as the day of the elections.

Between the dissolution and the election, Venizelos carried out a gigantic electoral tour throughout Greece. One of his first endeavours was to allay the fears of his sovereign and take the edge off the opposition's criticism by dissociating himself from the Military League. In a circular to the military authorities,

he instructed them to urge the officers under their command to devote themselves to their professional duties and abstain from taking part in politics. Once his rear was saved, he concentrated all his fire against the opposition parties. The maladministration of the "Reactionaries" had undermined Greek finances. The revolution of 1909 had been the result of their mismanagement. They had left the army and navy a prey to disorganisation and unpreparedness. He urged the nation to give them the only answer worth their while—to sweep them out of public life. On the eve of the elections, he issued an address to the nation. "I do not promise," he wrote, "that the Government now, or in the future, will inaugurate the Golden Age; since the illness has been grave, the cure will be long; what I do promise, is that the cure shall be serious and radical." And then he dwelt on other general issues. Above all, Venizelos was a moralist. "The first duty of a politician is to know how to sacrifice his personal interests and those of his party to the general interests of the fatherland. It is equally his duty always to tell the truth to great and small alike without concerning himself about the discontent his words may cause. Leaders must set the example of absolute submission to the laws, otherwise how can they compel respect for them on the part of the citizens? . . . The statesman ought to seek power not as an end, but as the means of realising an elevated and patriotic goal. He will not hesitate then to relinquish it if his place at the head of the Government has to be purchased by the abandonment of his programme."¹ It sounds more like a treatise on the duties of statesmen than an electioneering appeal. The results of the elections were astounding. In the Revisionist Assembly of January 1911, three hundred out of three hundred and sixty-four deputies were Venizelists (belonging to the Liberal Party headed by Venizelos). He was free now to embark upon his grandiose programme for the regeneration of Greece. Every phase of national life, every aspect of Government activity showed symptoms of decay. The "Second Revisionary National Assembly," which met on January 21, 1911, "adopted the revised Constitution on June 11. After a vehement discussion

¹ *La Politique de la Grèce*, preface by Joseph Reinach, pp. 7-8; quoted by P. H. Box, *Three Master Builders and Another*, p. 209.

an addition was made to Article 2, forbidding the translation of the Scriptures without the consent of the Church of Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarch. Elementary education, declared compulsory, was to be provided gratis by the State. The expropriation of proprietors for purposes of public utility was defined with special reference to the sale of the large estates and the creation of a peasant proprietary in Thessaly. The quorum of the Chamber was reduced to one-third of all its members; parliamentary vacancies were not, unless very numerous, to be filled in the last year of a legislature; military men were declared ineligible as deputies; election petitions were transferred from the Chamber to a special Tribunal. . . . The Council of State was revived, public officials with few exceptions obtained security of tenure, and the official language was declared to be that in which the Constitution was drawn up. The Assembly further passed a bill creating the post of Inspector General of the Army, despite the opposition of General Zorbas, and thus restoring the Crown Prince to the Military Command.”¹ So Mr. Miller summarises a few of the achievements of the first Venizelist administration. There were many more: the establishment of a strong commission for directing the finances of the country: the calling of a British naval mission under Admiral Kerr to reorganise the navy and of a French mission to reorganise the army: the creation of a Ministry of Agriculture to help towards the spreading of scientific knowledge through model farms under European experts. Many of the reforms which were embodied in the legislation of this period were not completed until after the Balkan wars (1912–1913) by the passing of a series of Acts which also provided for employer’s liability, sickness, old age pensions and university extensions. A tremendous programme of road and railway construction was inaugurated. By calling foreign experts to direct the country’s finances, to reorganise the army and the navy and instruct in agriculture, Venizelos was laying open the way to foreign influence. When practically everything of importance in one country is in the hands of foreign experts, that country is inevitably drawn into the political orbit of the Powers who supply the experts. It was to England and France

¹ Wm. Miller: *The Ottoman Empire and its Successors*, pp. 493–494.

that Greece appealed for guidance. A few years later, these two countries had certain claims on Greece; could Venizelos refuse them?

Once the Government appeared to have given the country the elements of stability, international capital demanded concessions. British capital was interested in marsh draining, land reclamation and electric supply, American in water supply, and French in transport. The opportunity for investment was favourable. Security was guaranteed, the prospects were good, and at the head of the Government international finance had a trusted and faithful friend.

The Cretans, encouraged by the results of the December elections, demanded that Greece should annex Crete without delay. Once more the Protecting Powers were disturbed: they notified Turkey that her "sovereign rights over Crete have been, and are, recognised by the Powers, and that the acts of the Cretan Assembly can have no effect on the determination of the four Powers to maintain the sovereign rights of Turkey." In May the Turkish Government, evidently encouraged by the friendly intervention of the Powers on her behalf, appointed Kadis (religious judges) for the Moslem population of Crete, instructing them to perform civil as well as religious functions, in defiance of the Cretan Constitution, which vested civil rights in the head of the Cretan Government. The Cretans became uneasy and intimated that they intended to prevent forcibly the landing of the Kadis. The Powers were compelled to intervene again, this time at Constantinople, where they informed the Sublime Porte that her proposed action was a violation of the Constitution, and as such could not be sanctioned by them. Constantinople yielded.

In his new office, Venizelos found the Cretan question a continuous source of trouble. He wanted by all means to avoid offering Turkey the opportunity of starting war by allowing the Cretan deputies to sit in the Greek Parliament, which the Turkish Government made plain she would regard as an act of war. And what was more, the Powers were on the side of Turkey over this question.

By far the greatest achievement of Venizelos was the reorganisation he effected in the armed forces of the country. Enthusiastic

reports from military attachés sent to their governments spoke of the progress made by Greece in this direction. For eighty years Greece had presented the stirring drama of a nation trying to work out its own salvation against tremendous odds. During all those years there hung over the new State the grave danger of another enslavement. Faction had almost completely undermined a far from solid national structure. But now Greece could at least look with a certain amount of confidence at her own powers of defence.

For this Venizelos received full credit. The manufacturers, shipowners and merchant classes turned to him and gave him their fullest support. The peasants and to some extent the working classes also supported his administration.

With the restoration of normal conditions throughout the country, the work of the National Assembly came to an end. At the general election for an ordinary Chamber, held on March 25, 1912, Venizelos obtained the support of one hundred and fifty out of one hundred and eighty-one members. The victory over his rivals was complete and devastating. Rhalles and Theotokes, two ex-Premiers, lost their seats, for the first time, to Liberal candidates. Rhalles's position in Attica had been considered impregnable, and Theotokes was regarded as equally secure in Corfu. Thus a complete break was made with the political past with the crushing defeat of old-gang corruption and party strife.

The Cretan Revolutionary Assembly, which assumed the government of the island at the outbreak of Italo-Turkish war (October 1911) elected sixty-nine deputies, who intended to take their places in the new Greek Chamber. Some were arrested by the international force when about to leave Crete and detained as prisoners, but twenty-two managed to escape and get to Athens. Later on their number increased to forty.

Their presence in Athens was very embarrassing to Venizelos's administration. He knew that amidst his preoccupation with the Balkan Alliance, conducted in an atmosphere of utmost secrecy, a precipitous solution of the Cretan problem might wreck all his plans. In the military agreement with Bulgaria, signed after prolonged and distressing negotiations, it was

emphatically stated that Bulgaria could not come to the assistance of Greece in the event of a Greco-Turkish war arising out of the admission of Cretans to the Greek Parliament. Venizelos could not reveal this. The people and a great number of deputies were in favour of allowing the Cretans to take their places, unconscious of the harm that that would cause. By persuasion, and by using the military at times, Venizelos prevented the deputies from taking their seats, and thus avoided a premature and inopportune war with Turkey.

Cleavage with the past was not confined to the change of political personages. The new Prime Minister intended to carry things further than his predecessors. A young nation needed stimulation in every sphere of activity and the Prime Minister had his hand in everything. "He was to be seen at every lecture of importance, he patronised all the efforts of literary and historical societies to spread a knowledge of the Greek classics and to infuse the new language with the ancient. He attended the Athenian theatre regularly and gave the revived drama every encouragement. Working for long periods of time for eighteen hours a day, without a holiday, save that afforded him by the restless and abounding interest he took in every manifestation of the national spirit, he imbued all with whom he came into contact with the splendid and commanding energy that won for this man of forty-seven the devotion and enthusiasm of all that was young and idealistic in the life of Greece."¹ Not only that. Dissociation from the past could not be achieved solely by hard work and the shattering of the deadening influence of the old parties. It needed a more determined and bold contact with the people, a cementing of the bonds of human relationship.

Dr. Antonios P. Savvides of Harvard University explained how for long years Venizelos had mesmerised the Greek people, aroused it from its languor and inspired it with victory. The Greeks, satisfied only with personal contacts, required much of Venizelos.

"In the antechamber of Venizelos one meets the queerest visitors, from ministers and generals with whom he regulates the affairs of State to the lowliest peasant whose crops are not

¹ P. H. Box: *Three Master Builders and Another*, p. 211.

promising, to the woman whose rheumatism does not let her sleep—everyone demands a personal interview of Venizelos to state his grievances and his desires. Venizelos must know that Demetrios, whose goat has been stolen, is not pleased with the internal administration. After Demetrios he must receive the old grandmother who has been waiting for two hours to explain to the Premier that the overcoat which was given to her grandson in the army is somewhat worn and that Venizelos must write immediately to the military authorities that they must replace it with one worthy of the physique of her strapping boy.

"Once there came a request from an unhappy husband who begged Venizelos to lead his wife back to the right path. 'If you, Mr. President,' wrote the petitioner, 'would only summon my wife and admonish her, I am sure that she would listen to you, and that she would change her conduct, and so, thanks to you, I should find my lost happiness again.' How with all his goodwill does Venizelos find time to occupy himself with the affairs of Greece, the goat of Demetrios, the vegetables of the peasants, the grandson's overcoat and the unfaithful wife? For he does do so!"¹

The above is a sidelight upon Greek psychology in relation to authority. The Greeks are essentially a democratic race. Inaccessibility of persons in authority is, for them, intolerable. Throughout their tortuous history, the Greek people have shown themselves completely invulnerable to servility. Conquered by the Romans, they helped to educate and civilise their conquerors, and during the centuries they were under the tyrannical yoke of the Sultan their folklore was full of defiance and, at the same time, of national pride. Being an individualistic race, they easily fell victims to schismatic influence. Emotional, high-spirited, and imbued with individualism, ignoring all councils of agreement or of compromise, throughout the three thousand years of their history they had failed continuously and inevitably, in spite of occasional brilliant and staggering successes. The Greeks who had emerged from Ottoman rule interpreted freedom as synonymous with lawlessness, and cultivated political intolerance and vindictiveness.

¹ Quoted by H. A. Gibbons: *Venizelos*, pp. 162-3.

Venizelos knew the psychological outlook of his people, and acted accordingly. He discarded entirely the traditional methods of former Greek rulers. He did not don the mantle of the superman, but relied upon the old and undiscredited arts of subtle persuasion to see him through. He realised the great importance of establishing himself in the hearts of the people, and knew also that he could not achieve that end more effectively than by direct approach and simplicity. In dealing with his political rivals or the Court intriguers, he had a complete armoury of subterfuges, provocations and evasions. He was equally at home among peasants, diplomats, intellectuals and conspirators. He had graduated from that exciting school of strife and intrigue in Crete, and all his life, in spite of his Europeanised exterior, he remained essentially a rebel and conspirator.

During his first Premiership, Venizelos exhibited remarkable astuteness in handling many difficult situations. But nowhere was the natural aptitude of the man more clearly manifested than in the handling of incidents of more or less private character. Soon after the second general elections, the Athenian papers gave publicity to certain defamatory declarations purporting to emanate from Prince George, the former High Commissioner of Crete, resident in Paris. In them, the Prime Minister was personally attacked and presented as harbouring anti-dynastic feelings. The opposition jumped to the call at once and tried to raise questions of private honour with political expediency to destroy the popularity of the Premier. Venizelos was, for a moment, in a dilemma. He sensed a trap. Had his rivals succeeded in provoking him to any declarations incompatible with the dignity of his position, they would have certainly hit his Achilles heel. He refrained from any public statement and waited patiently for the return of the King from his European tour to put the position before him.

Partisan feeling was aroused. The Liberals and the still faithful military demanded an answer to the princely insults. Venizelos, to placate his followers, secretly encouraged the political writer of a Liberal paper to write a series of articles attacking the Prince. As a result, proceedings for libel were taken against the editor of the paper and the writer of the articles. Venizelos then called

on the writer and said to him: "What are you going to do now? You know that I cannot help you. My position is very delicate and yours even more so, because it is well known that you are my friend and that I usually inspire your articles. Whether your articles are libellous or not is a question for the Court. I did not consider them so when you read them to me. In any case, this is beside the point. I called on you to tell you, my friend, that political struggles are carried out with bravery and sacrifice. You must also know that I will not attempt to support you in any form whatsoever. The only thing I can do is to ask the King, in the event of your being sentenced, to grant you pardon."¹

While the trial was proceeding, Prince George issued a statement denying the charges attributed to him. With this, the King asked for both the editor and the writer to be released as the Crown had dropped the action against them.

During 1910-11, the opposition made full play of the alleged anti-dynastic tendencies of Venizelos. In this they went beyond the truth. Venizelos believed in royalty, but only so far as the "irresponsible head of the State" (as he was fond of calling the King) confined his duties within the spirit and the letter of the Constitution. In a parliamentary debate, he declared that he was not against the monarchy as an institution. He was against the person of the monarch because he neglected his constitutional duties and let himself be the puppet of his entourage and swayed by his political friends. As a King, in the past, he had not been above political parties. Naturally, when he found that the King, with the changed situation which nearly cost him his throne, made a complete reversal and undertook his duties with zeal and determination, there was no further question of his being against the King.

In spite of this solemn declaration of loyalty there still existed between sovereign and minister a certain amount of distrust. Court officials tried to thwart all attempts at reconciliation. They even tried to embarrass the Prime Minister. Dionysios Stefanou, the political adviser to the King, one day, in studying the laws and decrees submitted for signature, observed a certain legal flaw in a bill and returned it to the appropriate minister for

¹ S. Stefanou: "Memoirs." *Athenaika Nea*, March 28, 1936.

correction, with an intimation that if it was not corrected, the King would refuse to sign it. As soon as Venizelos heard of this, he at once hurried to the palace.

"Your Majesty," he said, "my Government submits its resignation." The King was astounded. "What's happened?" he asked.

"Since you refuse to sign the bills of my minister," replied Venizelos, "there is no other way open for me but to resign."

"Who said this?"

"Your Majesty's private secretary returned a parliamentary bill unsigned, asking for certain modifications from one of my ministers. My Government cannot accept this and, as a result, I place its resignation in your hands. The Constitution does not concede any authority to the secretary, the adviser or the aide-de-camp of the King. The Constitution refers explicitly to King and Ministers. The King, bearing the responsibility of authority, has the right to agree or disagree with his Ministers, and it is within his constitutional rights to refuse to sign a bill or a decree. The adviser of the King does not exist as a constitutional entity. The Government ignores him. In consequence, the Government cannot accept observations, suggestions, advice or orders from a source not legally entitled to a private opinion. If your Majesty's secretary acted on your instructions then it is the Crown that is in disagreement with my Government and the Government is obliged to resign. But if your secretary acted independently, then my Government, not acknowledging and not willing to accept overlordship from a royal secretary, asks for his immediate removal. I am not referring to the person holding this position and whom I profoundly respect, but refer to it merely as a matter of principle."

The King hastened to explain that there had been a misunderstanding. "I never refused to sign any of your Government's documents. If I have objections, or any questions to ask, I usually do so myself. . . . And in order to show you that my secretary acted without my consent, I will be very sorry to deprive myself of his services and will accept his resignation instantly."

Within an hour, the political adviser to the King had resigned.¹

¹ *Op. cit.*, March 27, 1936.

Step by step the conspirators were removed from Court. The political life of Greece began to shed its irresponsible meddlers. The Phanariotes, who brought from Byzantium the artistry of intrigue, perfected by centuries of Turkish rule into a remarkable weapon with its back-stage gossip and shadowy movements behind the scenes, who knew how to influence by persuasion or threat, suave, learned, cultured and corrupt, found a great enemy in the person of the new Prime Minister. They were spineless. Venizelos had the courage to stand up for his principles and actions. They were bred in the unhealthy atmosphere of theocratic Turkey, and remained essentially the figures moving in and around the palace and the political salons. Venizelos, a revolutionary, a man of the people, brought a new form of action upon the political scene.

All these matters were not left secret. People came to know about them, and Venizelos became the subject of conversation of the café gossipers.

Nothing is more loved by the Greeks than talk and anecdote. It has been said that they are a nation of parliamentarians. It may be so. For in spite of the efforts of the ethnologists in trying to disprove any connection between the modern and the ancient Greeks, at least as far as loquacity and noise are concerned, there is a striking continuity. The Athenian, after his day's work, used to go to the *agora* to hear the political demagogues, to argue, to oppose or to approve. He was indirectly becoming part of the ruling machine! He could shout down Pericles, applaud Cleon or denounce Peisistratus. He was essentially the "political animal" of Aristotle. The contemporary Athenian sips his coffee in one of the thousand cafés of the city and talks about everything. It is his political rostrum and his rendezvous. Political affairs interest him most, and here, among this vast army of gossipers, Venizelos's stock was rising. He was clever, astute and courageous—virtues to be commented upon. His quarrels with the King were good "copy"—as a Greek loves a verbal kick at those in high places—and so were his brilliant repartees in Parliament and his real or fictitious love affairs. After all, nothing is more toothsome than scandal. An ascetic æsthete or a recluse may be tolerated, but he is not loved. But a man of the world,

an obvious temptation to the aristocratic ladies, that was a different matter. Ladies of beauty and repute sought his company. He was a widower, another temptation! He was lionised, but he refused to be corrupted.

What chiefly characterised the ascendancy of Venizelos was his indomitable courage. Upon the rostrum of Parliament he revealed that ferocious spirit which had swept over the rugged surface of Crete. He was, at the same time, dignified and merciless in debate. He never descended to insults or levity, but adopted towards the opposition a somewhat patronising attitude, almost cruel in its implied ridicule. He never spared their past follies. They were responsible for the defeat of Greece. They left the country at the mercy of brigandage and corruption; neglected the army and the navy; instead of the Greek kingdom becoming the focal point for the liberation of Grecia irredenta it had resigned itself to the support of the Greeks outside the kingdom. The old politicians were continuously pilloried. When on one occasion the opposition was very noisy and the speaker could not be heard, Venizelos gravely remarked, "Gentlemen, by your behaviour you have turned the House of Greece into an Athenian tavern." In general, his speeches in Parliament were something like visionary dissertations on the moral aspect of the mission of Hellenism. Though a realist, he liked to elaborate an abstract principle. In him both the Greek and Christian traditions blended admirably. He found it impossible to subordinate his thoughts and energies completely to contemporary exigencies. His inspiration was history tinged by a fervent religious belief. He became the last crusader of Christendom and the one who, by a stroke of realism, closed at Lausanne the religious war which had afflicted civilised humanity ever since the valiant hordes of Aboubekr crossed the blazing deserts of Arabia to enforce Mohammedanism on the world.

* * *

At first all the energies of Venizelos were directed to internal reconstruction. The State was sick. Departmentalism had sunk into a morass of bureaucracy. Every manifestation of national life bore unmistakable signs of oriental lethargy and was

permeated by the Ottoman spirit of fatalism. A titanic effort was needed to arouse this mass of inertia. He placed capable men in responsible positions, but he made the mistake of recruiting them from among his intimate political associates. A precedent was created. Civil service became once again identified with political parties and its neutral character was forfeited. The permanency of the civil service, which Venizelos legalised, lasted only as long as his Ministry!

One of his first actions as Prime Minister was the restoration of the Crown Prince to the active command of the army. The Prince, who had studied military science in Germany and was the brother-in-law of the Kaiser, enjoyed a good reputation as a military strategist. Although the débâcle of 1897 had greatly shattered that reputation, shortly afterwards he again found himself at the head of the army, until the *coup d'état* of the Military League deprived him of it. Prince Constantine's qualities were outweighed by grave defects. He was brought up by a Romanov mother in the traditions of authoritarianism, which were strengthened by his Hohenzollern associations. He was of an unstable, violent nature. His autocratic character made him unpopular in the army councils, in spite of his recognised military brilliance. Under the circumstances, Venizelos's action was ill-advised. Had he contented himself with leaving the army as it was, but enlisting the services of the ablest strategists in the form of an advisory council, many subsequent difficulties would never have arisen. His apologists justify this action as a sign of Venizelos's ambition to unify Greece. If so, he backed the wrong horse, and by a miscalculation made the army an instrument of royalty.

CHAPTER V

THE PLOT SUCCEEDS—THE BALKAN ALLIANCE

MANY times during the early spring of 1911 the Athenians could see a lonely, stooping, broad-shouldered man, with an almost white beard, walking towards Stadium. He usually had a book under his arm, and acknowledged salutes with a disarming smile. He appeared deep in thought. He would usually sit under the trees on the bank of poetic Ilissus and gaze towards the Gulf of Corinth. In the beautiful Attic spring he would sit there as long as the necessities of work permitted, reading, or gazing at the panoramic grandeur of Nature. To his left was the eternal city, with the imperishable crown of the Acropolis. Beyond the Mount of Pentelis buzzed with the milliards of its bees, and in the distance were silhouetted the mountains of Attica. In the harbour of Piræus rows upon rows of merchant ships were anchored—the silent symbols of the Turkish boycott.

Venizelos would look round for a few minutes, inhale deeply the cool air coming down from the pine-clad mountains, and in the warm bosom of Nature find solace from the angry passions of politics. Then he would suddenly plunge into a book. To the end of his days, he was an omnivorous reader. He could still memorise the classics and in his younger days he used to recite from memory many classical and modern Greek poets to his friends in Crete. Occasionally, instead of a book of verse, of philosophy or sociology, he would take with him a French or English grammar and study languages. He felt that in his new position a knowledge of European languages was not only an advantage but a necessity. Asked later on, how he managed to master so many languages, he remarked, “Like everything else, the learning of a language is *une question de l’audace*. In order to master a language, once you have an elementary knowledge of it, simply shoot off the first word which comes into your head without troubling yourself much about it. You will say the wrong word the first or second time, but eventually you will get it right.”

Venizelos's walks were not only a solace, but also a pilgrimage. He possessed a deep religious sentiment. He prayed regularly in Church, but more often in the secluded spots of the forests or on the top of the hills. So deep-rooted was his belief that sometimes it bordered on idolatry. He would associate inanimate objects with supernatural powers. He had on him, until the end of his life, an amulet alleged to be part of the cross upon which Christ died. It was handed down through the dark past from generation to generation and he believed firmly in its transcendental power. Belief with him was not an urge, but an inexhaustible native power. "The greatest pleasure and strength of a man," he once said, "is his faith." And it was undoubtedly this quality of "faith" implemented by the great factor of self-reliance which turned him into the resolute leader of Hellas. However mystical and irrational, his belief was not vague. There was nothing of the unsubstantial dream about it. But he had, as he said, by reason of his belief in the destiny of Greece, the power to see ahead beyond current reality. As a realist, he understood the limitations of positivism and actively generated through the Hellenic world fervent belief in its historic mission as the vehicle for the attainment of that reality.

The nation began to shake off its lethargy. The army was reorganised and supplied with better weapons, the fleet was being overhauled and new units were bought. After a dozen years, the spirit of defeat of 1897 gave way to aggressive confidence. The Liberal Party sent its agents through the countryside to arouse the people. Whether as the means for collecting money for the army and navy or simply as propaganda campaigns, these tours left behind them a trail of searing nationalism. Patriot-bards accompanied the propagandists. In the wild sun-bathed valleys of Morea and Attico-Bœotia the meetings ended with a touch of *Æschylean* grandeur. The speeches and the exultations were followed by the recitations of the bards. All their songs bore a nationalist strain. In them was portrayed the long, murderous fight between oppressed and oppressor; they showed an unfailing belief in the ultimate victory of Greece. One of those war-poems was the famous symbolic song of Vallaoritis called the "Rock and the Wave." The rock was Turkey and the wave was

Greece. In ever-recurring onslaughts the wave was breaking against the majestic immobility of the rock, but gradually its corroding powers undermined the rock and in final tempestuous conflict the rock disappeared beneath the silvery foam. It was by this method of undermining, by intermittent guerrilla warfare that the cumbersome, pompous structure of the Ottoman Empire would gradually begin to give way. The last simile foreshadowed the relentless progress which would bring the two enemies to a last decisive battle.

And it was chiefly for this last struggle that the Hellenic world was to be prepared. Above all, they should know what was happening to the Greek people in the Aegean Islands and in Asia Minor as well as in Thessaly, Epirus, Thrace and Macedonia. They should understand that their liberation was a sacred duty devolving on their shoulders. The Greek soul began to seek the baptism of fire. The burning embers of religious and national fanaticism were fanned, and soon the yellow flames of avengeful fury had destroyed the finer agencies of reason.

Venizelos saw his work, looked at its results, and pondered. By expert propaganda he had succeeded, in the space of a few months, in banishing the spirit of defeat and in establishing confidence. But he saw that he would overreach himself. Like Pandora, he stood trembling with the box, hesitant to unleash the pent-up popular wrath. Was Greece in a position to face war with Turkey single handed? No! For the moment, prudence and caution was the best policy. There was bitter feeling between the two countries and the least incident might precipitate a catastrophe. Above all, he should avoid giving offence to Turkey. As Prime Minister he missed no opportunity of urging that it was necessary for Greece to cultivate the friendship of Turkey.

But behind this diplomatic goodwill, the web of conspiracy began to take form.

* * *

Beyond the frontiers of Greece stretched the slumbering Turkish colossus. The "sick man of Europe" exercised an authority stretching from the Adriatic to the Persian Gulf, but

it had nothing of its ancient strength and vitality. At one time the Crescent—the symbol of the mighty empire of the Caliph—was flying from the borders of Vienna to Aden and from Gibraltar to Karachi. Its very size became, in the long run, cumbersome. It had long succeeded in enlisting the service of fighting men in their millions, in maintaining, and in administering order; but it lost the power to evolve, to adapt itself. It ruled over the richest parts of the earth, but its peoples were poor and hungry, and at last the numerous races it held in its grasp brought about its disintegration. The Ottoman Empire began to crumble.

Of late, signs of awakening life had appeared in the slumbering giant. The Young Turks had appeared on the scene. A handful of young men with Parisian culture and ultra-modern political conceptions had shouldered the task of regenerating Turkey. The task was not easy. With the best will in the world the Ottoman Empire could be sustained only at the expense of oppressed peoples. The Young Turks did not evolve a formula to solve the problem. Nor did they attempt to tackle the root cause of the evil energetically. They swallowed the pill of French nationalism and thought that it could work miracles in Turkey!

Enver, the swashbuckling leader of the revolution, declared that discrimination between the different races constituting the Ottoman Empire was now at an end. It soon transpired that the young leaders were not the God-sent saviours. Under the Europeanised garment of constitutionalism lurked the spirit of theocracy. They interpreted liberty as the achievement of national and religious uniformity. In the name of freedom they made an onslaught against the different races of the Empire. Their patriotic fervour aroused in the illiterate Turkish masses a passionate religious fervour and fanned the dormant hostile feelings towards infidels. Their reign started fittingly with a massacre of the Armenians. Soon they declared a boycott of Greece and massed troops on the frontiers.

On the other hand, among the Balkan States there was age-long antagonism and distrust. This was duly exploited by the Great Powers, particularly Russia and Austria-Hungary, who took pains to keep the Balkan States at loggerheads, so as to further their own Balkanic ambitions. Serbia and Bulgaria

were in deadly conflict ever since Bulgaria achieved independence. Bulgarian support and national enterprise brought into being I.M.R.O., the Macedonian committee whose object was to convert the non-Bulgars in Macedonia and eventually to deprive the Greeks and the Serbians of any claims on that territory. Both Greece and Serbia followed Bulgaria's example and sent armed bands and apostolic patriots to counteract the propaganda of their opponents. Very often these bands would come into bloody encounters, which helped to alienate further the various states, much to the satisfaction of Constantinople. Greek public opinion could not forget what had befallen the Greek elements in Bulgarian territory, particularly in Eastern Rumelia. Although the statute of that formerly autonomous region guaranteed to the Greek minority parliamentary representation and educational and ecclesiastical freedom, and placed the Greek language on a footing of equality with the Bulgarian, nothing remained of nearly quarter of a million Greeks of Rumelia and the Black Sea coast after thirty years of Bulgarian rule. On the pretext of religious differences (the Bulgarian schism) the constitutional privileges of the Greeks were suppressed and gradually they were forced to flee from the land of their birth. In 1906, as a reprisal for the killing of Bulgarian agents in Macedonia by Greek bands, the Greek towns of Anchialos and Stenimachos were razed to the ground, the Greek schools in Philippopolis were burned, and a disgraceful pogrom was carried out against the Greeks throughout Bulgaria. Similar occurrences were taking place against the Serbian Slavs. Serbia, certainly not behind in official ruthlessness and tyranny, was repaying Bulgarian excesses with heavy interest. Fortunately, no citizens of these two states lived within the liberated Greek Kingdom, and so pre-war Greece was not dishonoured by pogroms.

All the Balkan States were a seething cauldron of unrest, all of them ready for war against Turkey and against one another. Nothing could emerge from this barren relationship where every point of contact was conflict—not even a large-scale war. Every state looked to their protectors in Europe, who were also their financial and political masters.

Venizelos, Prime Minister of Greece, possessed exact information of the attitude of the Great Powers towards their smaller friends. He further knew that the policy of Europe, ruled by the maxim of "mutual fear," sought to preserve, even in fossilised form, the Ottoman Empire. Behind him lay the history of repeated attempts and failures to secure unity among the peoples of the Peninsula. True, there were gaps among the Balkan States through which flowed violent streams of hate, but around them roared the angry rising tide of Turkish nationalism. Only by uniting in a common purpose could they banish the spectre of Ottoman menace.

He set himself to work resolutely. He instructed his ambassadors to "explore possibilities" and sound opinions. These took the form of tentative inquiries as to what would be the attitude of Bulgaria and Serbia in the event of a Greco-Turkish war over the Cretan question. No progress was made. In every direction he ran against the granite wall of distrust.

* * *

Friendships are often formed and maintained in the face of mutual danger. The Turkish nationalists were moving. The volume of their oratory and bellicosity grew with the growth of Turkish arms. Were they to wait until their redoubtable military machine, which Germany, with other objects in view, had helped to modernise, was ready? Over them hung the doom of another invasion.

The excessive nationalistic zeal of the Young Turks produced internal disturbances. The Bulgars of Macedonia renewed their revolutionary organisation in self defence and invited the Powers to take control. The Druses revolted in Syria. The Greek Bishop of Grevena was murdered, the immunity of the Orthodox Church was violated and the Patriarch declared the Church in danger. A rebel leader took control of Yemen. The mountain folk of Albania revolted. Most of these uprisings were suppressed with a ferocity which even by Turkish standards was admitted to be excessive. But side by side with the internal disturbances and their suppression, the war feeling in the country was being aroused and the Government would welcome an opportunity of

an attack upon Greece as a means of diverting attention from internal difficulties towards a foreign war. And if Greece was overrun, who could guarantee Bulgaria and Serbia?

Although Venizelos and Gueshov (Prime Minister of Bulgaria) were both for obvious reasons determined to pursue a policy of conciliation towards Turkey, the massacres of their co-religionists in Macedonia and the tenor of Turkish policy brought them to realise that their interests could be better served by a defensive alliance.

In April 1911 Venizelos made the first move towards a Balkan alliance. His Government invited a group of Bulgarian students to visit Athens for Easter. Through the medium of Mr. Bourchier, Balkan correspondent to *The Times*, who was in the confidence of both Governments, suggestions for a Greco-Bulgarian *rapprochement* were made to Sofia. Venizelos was a believer in secret diplomacy. He withheld all knowledge of these proceedings from his Cabinet colleagues and took only the King into his confidence. A Balkan alliance could only be fashioned, under the circumstances, on the basis of conspiracy.

The first feelers revealed that the two Prime Ministers regarded the prospect of war with Turkey as inevitable. They accordingly undertook to prepare popular feeling for such an alliance. But the natural course of diplomacy was too slow. Bulgaria enjoyed the protection of the Tsar. The efficiency and valour of the Bulgarian army stood high in the estimation of Europe. This hardy race of hillmen has won, in its thousand years of European habitation, both the respect and fear of conquerors and neighbours alike. On the west was the other branch of the Slavic peoples—the Serbians. The ill-fed, ill-armed peasant levies of that small country had perpetrated feats of astonishing gallantry against the Turks. For sheer physical endurance and reckless bravery, the Serbian soldier had no equal in Europe. Both Slavic peoples had behind them a long history of bloody strife against Ottoman domination. Greece, on the other hand, was the typical small state, whose rulers' maladministration had reduced her to the position characteristically described as "the chambermaid of Europe." Her enormous coastline rendered her extremely vulnerable. Ever since 1830 (when Greek independence was

officially recognised) Greece had been a land of faction and strife. In no other country have there been so many political parties and political leaders contesting for power. And nowhere has there been such an interminable chain of political murders, rebellions, uprisings, *coups d'état* as in Greece. In consequence, the army was undisciplined, the authority of the State almost nil, the countryside at the mercy of local chieftains and bandit-ridden. The two Slavic nations were reluctant to associate with Greece.

Gueshov accepted in principle Venizelos's suggestions, but left it at that. The Bulgarian General Staff refused to shoulder the responsibility of a militarily insolvent ally.

While the Balkan States, still poles apart, were feverishly engaged in diplomatic *pourparlers*, Italy invaded Libya. On June 9, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs had declared that the basis of Italian policy was the maintenance of the *status quo* of the Ottoman Empire in Africa and anywhere else. Three months later (September 26, 1911) Italian forces invaded Libya on the pretext that "the state of disorder and neglect"¹ and the "opposition to every Italian initiative" in Tripoli and the Cyrenaica called forth the adoption of war measures against Turkey. It was a flimsy excuse. Italy came into the colonial scramble late. The High Command was still smarting under the defeat at Adowa. The object of invading Libya was the vindication of Italian prestige and the pursuance of economic interests against France in Morocco and Great Britain in Egypt.

To the Balkans, the Italian invasion was welcomed as a God-sent opportunity. The King of Montenegro suggested a simultaneous attack upon Turkey. Venizelos, over-confident of the result effected in the Greek army under the guidance of the French military mission, offered to join the Italians in their war against Turkey and proposed to invade Macedonia with one hundred and fifty thousand men. Giolitti (the Italian Prime Minister) mentions in his memoirs that it was at the time against Italian and European interests to bring about a conflagration in the Balkans.² Italian policy was governed by the Austrian inspired fear of Pan-Slavism, and the King of Montenegro and

¹ Miller, W.: *The Ottoman Empire and its Successors*, p. 496.

² Giolitti: "Memoirs," p. 356.

Venizelos were both advised to keep quiet and maintain peace. However courageous, Venizelos's suggestion was rash and highly dangerous. Had he gone to war with Turkey to assist the Italians, who were bottled up in Libya, he would inevitably have met with disaster. The projected alliance was still in the stage of preliminary conversations and neither the Bulgarians nor the Serbians would have come to his assistance. In a few weeks, however, the situation appeared to have changed.

Turkey, afraid of a Bulgarian advance, mobilised impressive forces near the Bulgarian frontier. The least provocation on the part of Bulgaria would have been considered an adequate reason to start the ball of war rolling. The position of Bulgaria appeared for a while extremely critical. Venizelos seized the occasion to renew his overtures for an alliance and instructed M. Panas, the Greek Minister, to communicate to M. Gueshov that if Bulgaria would intervene in the event of a Turkish aggression on Greece, the Greek Government would give a guarantee that she in turn would fight in the event of Turkey attacking Bulgaria.

This friendly gesture was appreciated in Sofia, but the General Staff was still adamant in its attitude. It visualised, and was working for, a Serbo-Bulgarian alliance as a prelude to a general alliance embracing Montenegro, but excluding Greece. Rizov, the Bulgarian Minister in Rome, was instructed to sound the Serbian Prime Minister, Milovanovich, on the possibility of such an alliance. The results were satisfactory and the Bulgarian Prime Minister secretly travelled to Serbia, where, after a thorough discussion, the foundations of an alliance were laid. Negotiations were opened and eventually, on March 13, 1912, an alliance was signed. It is characteristic of the state of mind of the Balkan rulers that, in spite of the alliance, there still existed profound disagreement as to the sharing out of territories to be conquered from Turkey, and that a clause was inserted in the treaty of alliance leaving the allocation of certain disputed areas to the arbitration of the Russian Tsar.

Meanwhile, Venizelos was playing very cautiously for time. He sent reports of the French military mission about the efficiency of the Greek army to Sofia, and never missed an opportunity of impressing upon the Bulgarians the indispensability of the

Greek navy in the event of a war with Turkey. These reports gradually overcame the objections of the Bulgarian General Staff, and negotiations began for a second time, in earnest. Venizelos had in mind a defensive alliance which would constitute a standing threat to the Ottoman Empire and, by so doing, would enforce the Turks to introduce administrative reforms for the benefit of the subject races. He carefully avoided any mention of territory to be acquired as a result of a successful war, because he knew that, in such a case, the Bulgarian and Greek points of view would clash, and the alliance would be wrecked. Gueshov stood for "autonomy" with equal rights for all nationalities. To the Greek, on the other hand, an autonomous Macedonia meant a stage in the process of its absorption by Bulgaria. To them partition was the only solution. But could there be an agreement on that? Both contested Salonika. Both wanted the hinterland of the Thermaic Gulf. How could these differences be reconciled? Bulgaria and Serbia went to the painful length of defining and delineating future acquisitions, while they agreed to differ over a certain issue which was to be left to the arbitration of a third party. Venizelos surmounted this difficulty by soaring to his customary heights of political morality. He evolved a formula which was accepted and eventually inserted in the preamble of the Treaty: "Bearing in mind that the peaceable existence of the various nationalities in Turkey, based on real and genuine political equality and on the respect of all the rights of the Christian nationalities in the Empire, whether they derive from Treaties or have been conceded to them in a different way, constitutes an indispensable condition for the consolidation of Peace in the East." The remaining clauses of the Treaty briefly provide for mutual assistance in case of war.¹

This studied vagueness of the Treaty (which was signed on May 29, 1912) provided its sole *raison d'être*. In spite of the promise of mutual assistance, each "hostile friend" was still apprehensive of the other. The Bulgarians relied on their military superiority to bring them a good share of territory. Venizelos refused to discuss territorial gains on the grounds that the alliance was purely defensive and was merely the means of compelling Turkey

¹ Gueshov, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

to put her house in order. Meanwhile, under this camouflage he was preparing for war. Later, when answering charges of neglecting national interests by refusing to make an explicit agreement, he said that had he done so there could not have been an alliance at all. He was confident, he said, that if war broke out, the Greek army could occupy Salonika before either the Bulgars or the Serbs. Bulgaria, casting envious eyes towards the territories assigned to her by the Treaty of San Stefano, wanted Salonika and its hinterland. Venizelos believed that the military occupation of Salonika by Greek forces was a better guarantee for her remaining Greek than any clause of a treaty. Later, his rivals understood the real purpose of Venizelos's persistence in declining to discuss future acquisitions. The Rumanian Prime Minister, M. Jonescu, described this refusal as the greatest political triumph of Venizelos, and as one which reveals him as a man of political genius and remarkable political intuition.

Political actions are judged by results. The motives which inspire them, whether morally honourable or dishonest, can neither add to, or detract from the results. Machiavelli, the ablest theoretical political ruffian who ever existed, placed an undying halo on the word "ends": don't bother about "means"; whatever they are, evil constitutional practices, duplicity, treachery, evasion, spying, are politically justified and necessary so long as they produce the "right" results. At this time, and in many other instances in his life, the Cretan tried to follow the political doctrine of the Florentine.

Throughout the summer of 1912 a joint plan of action for the Greek and Bulgarian military forces and the Greek navy was being worked out, and the Greco-Bulgarian military convention was signed almost on the eve of the first Balkan war (September 25, 1912). Without detailing any plan of campaign and without any specific mention as to "exact" spheres of activity, the convention was more vague than the Treaty. It stipulated that three hundred thousand Bulgarian and one hundred and twenty thousand Greek troops were to be put in the field. The Greek fleet was to cut communications between Asia Minor and European Turkey. As the Haidar Ishmit railway line was entirely insufficient for the transport of adequate military forces in the

event of Turkish reverses in Macedonia, the only way to transport men and material from the huge Turkish reservoir of the East was from Smyrna by sea. In this connection, the contribution of the Greek navy was of decisive importance.

No agreement was reached between Serbia and Greece. The Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty provided that Bulgaria was to be Greece's neighbour on the north. So whatever adjustment had to be made between the two states was to be made through Bulgarian offices. The three Governments had only a verbal agreement with Montenegro, but at the insistence of Serbia a formal treaty of alliance was signed between Serbia and Montenegro in September. The General Staffs were to act independently, each deciding its own plan of campaign, keeping the other informed about the movements of troops.

After fourteen months of painstaking diplomatic work, the Balkan Alliance was a reality. It had been negotiated and signed in an atmosphere of secrecy, and no opportunity was given for external pressure to neutralise its results. Although the task of assuming the leadership of the alliance devolved on Bulgaria, it was Venizelos who was the prime mover and the genius behind it. His faith in the capabilities of the armed forces of his country was gradually becoming stronger and he could now afford to wait without undue anxiety, and declare more openly (though still with his inscrutable smile), that Greece needed the friendship of Turkey, but that Turkey should not neglect to introduce administrative reforms in her European provinces in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin.

With the successful conclusion of the Balkan League, Venizelos achieved the greatest success of his life. In a few months he had bridged a gap of enmity which had lasted for a thousand years. He succeeded in inspiring his Balkan colleagues with faith in themselves and in convincing them of the futility of subserviently following the Great Powers. It was the first large-scale challenge ever offered to Turkish oppression. Upon its outcome depended the fates of the subject peoples, whether they were to live in freedom, or whether the Balkan States should remain for ever under the shadow of the crescent.

From the Greek point of view, the Greco-Bulgarian Treaty was

a great diplomatic achievement. It ensured uniformity of action without defining the subjects for which action was required. It pledged the signatories to make war for precisely identical aims and did not enumerate, even vaguely, those aims. From the Bulgarian point of view, the lack of any detailed definition was perhaps an advantage. All territory occupied by the Bulgarian army was to be Bulgarian. They did not anticipate that the poor Greek army could make any impression on the Turkish forces. Both Gueshov and Venizelos appeared supremely satisfied, each feeling that he had got the better of the other, smiling with contentment at the results achieved. But both could not possibly have the last laugh!

They both forgot that round them, like two huge relentless spiders, Russia and Austria-Hungary were weaving a new web of plots into which the Balkans were to fall as victims.

* * *

Concurrently with the Greek elections of April 1912, the Cretans held separate elections to choose deputies to send to Athens, and thus confirm the abortive declaration of union. Once more the Powers sent their naval squadrons to Suda Bay. For the fiftieth time in forty years, the representatives of the Powers proclaimed that their aim in Crete was to preserve and safeguard the sovereignty of the Sultan. The Cretan deputies were forbidden to leave for Athens, but a good number of them succeeded in escaping in disguise and in making their way to the capital. Their presence in Athens made Venizelos extremely uncomfortable. In the alliance with Bulgaria there was a clause releasing Bulgaria from her obligations in the event of a Greco-Turkish war arising out of the Cretan question. Venizelos decided to prevent the Cretans from taking their seats at all costs. He knew that such action was extremely unpopular. Public opinion was wholeheartedly behind the Cretan deputies, and Venizelos found to his discomfort that his past was recoiling on his head.

On June 1, the official session of the Parliament was to begin with the customary speech from the throne. Fearing possible disturbances as a result of debarring the Cretans, strong forces of

police assisted by cavalry and infantry lined the roads, while a cordon of troops was posted round the House of Parliament. Barely had the session begun when a Cretan deputy, who had managed to get inside, jumped to his feet and demanded that his fellow members be admitted to Parliament. The opposition deputies supported him vociferously. There was pandemonium, and the speaker had to suspend the sitting. Venizelos, with some of his ministers, escaped from the House and made his way to his apartments. There he invited the Cretan deputies to see him. He had in his pocket the treaty of alliance with its onerous clause! By every conceivable argument he tried to persuade them to have a little more patience, to have confidence in him. Was he not himself a Cretan? They should give him some breathing space to arrange matters, otherwise Greece would have to face war with Turkey single handed. They were adamant. With courteous dignity Venizelos bowed to their insistence and sped to the House, followed by the Cretan deputies. While everybody was waiting for the vindication of the Cretans' demand, he produced a decree signed by the King proroguing Parliament until October 1. A difficult situation was dramatically surmounted.

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With the conclusion of the alliance, the Balkan States began diplomatic negotiations anew in order to determine the exact nature of the reforms they were going to demand from Turkey. The Albanian revolt and the massacre of the Macedonians made war imminent and inescapable. Yet none of the states, with the single exception of Montenegro, wanted war. For Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia the final drama had to be postponed until the possibilities of a peaceful arrangement were exhausted. The fall of the Young Turks after the defeat in Tripoli stiffened the attitude of the Turkish Government. They would not hear of negotiations, much less of compromise, and evidently relied on a successful war in the Balkans to extricate them from the dire difficulties resulting from the Italian victory which had cost them Tripoli and the Dodecanese.

The allies began to mobilise, and demanded of Turkey the enforcement of Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin. Turkey was

taken aback for a while, but soon (September 30) ordered a general mobilisation. This provided the needed excuse. Without delay the allies delivered an ultimatum to Turkey demanding administrative autonomy of the European provinces, the frontiers of which were to be re-drawn on ethnographic lines with Swiss or Belgian Governors; provincial elective assemblies; the re-organisation of the *gendarmerie*; freedom of education; a local militia; reforms under an equal number of Christian and Moslem councillors supervised not only by the ambassadors of the Powers, but also of the ministers of the Balkan States in Constantinople; and the immediate demobilisation of the Turkish army. At first, the Turkish Government, finding that the Balkan States meant business, made some hasty arrangements to convoke an assembly of nationalities. But the ultimatum, which was provoked by Turkish mobilisation, put an end to such last-minute window-dressing diplomacy. Montenegro, claiming a rectification of frontiers, attacked Turkey on October 8.

The prospect of war in the Balkans caused uneasiness throughout Europe, and the six Great Powers authorised the ministers of Austria-Hungary and Russia to present a joint note at Athens, Sofia and Belgrade, calling attention to the fact that, according to the Treaty of Berlin, the reforms in Macedonia were the responsibility of the Great Powers who were now prepared to intervene at Constantinople and enforce their promulgation. The note ended with an unequivocal threat. "If, despite this note, war does break out between the Balkan States and the Ottoman Empire, we shall not admit at the end of the conflict any modification of the territorial *status quo* in European Turkey."

The ill-advised action of the Powers had one and the only logical result—to encourage Turkey. Turkey, indirectly assured of the assistance of the Great Powers, who undertook to preserve her territorial integrity, adopted an unyielding attitude and answered the ultimatum by recalling her ministers from Sofia and Belgrade. On October 17, she declared war on Bulgaria and Serbia.

Greece was still neutral. Venizelos waited eight hours for the declaration of war. Then he summoned the Turkish Minister and enquired what were the causes of the delay. Ghalib Bey

attempted a last-minute reconciliation by offering Venizelos a working agreement as regards Crete, and expressed Turkey's desire to remain at peace with Greece. Venizelos stopped the interview bluntly. "Your Government has declared war on our allies and Greece automatically declares war on you. You will receive your passports immediately." Rising with a stiff bow, he indicated that nothing more was to be said. The two nations were at war. By a Governmental decree, the act of union between Crete and Greece was sanctioned immediately.

That same evening the main squadron of the Greek fleet put to sea from Piraeus in the presence of the King and the Prime Minister. Venizelos spoke to the sailors. The long-waited hour has come. The liberation of the enslaved Greeks was in their hands. "We enter the struggle full of confidence on land, for have we not allies? But our confidence is not less great at sea where our allies have entrusted their fate to us. We are full of hope, for we know the stuff you are made of, and that you are well prepared, and above all, we know the courage which inspires you. Our country expects you not merely to die for her, for that is little indeed; she expects you to conquer! That is why each one of you even in dying, should be possessed by one thought only—how to eke out his strength till the last breath so that the survivors may conquer."

The following day the Greek army crossed the frontier.

Rapidity of action and singleness of purpose did not afford Europe with the opportunity for intervention and mediation. Nothing could now stop the war, save general military intervention by the Powers. As this was out of the question, the chancelleries satisfied themselves with gloomy prognostications about the outcome of the war. The Turkish army enjoyed a high reputation. It was considered superior, both in numbers and quality, to its adversaries, and the Turkish soldier was believed to possess endurance second to none. The allies had no chance. The military experts of the serious European dailies began their daily forecasts about possible movements on the military chessboard. One calculation—the decisive one—was overlooked. If war was only the outcome of troop movements and concentrations, they were right. But in the last analysis, military

science is determined by the human factor, the capability of manoeuvring, the power to take resolute decisions without waiting for the cumbersome military machine to come to the rescue of the commander, the fire and enthusiasm of the soldier. Military ardour was apparent in the soldiers of the allies, who marched into battle with a patriotic fervour, envenomed by religious hatred, without equal in Europe. They were men forsown. The fire of liberty burned in their breasts, and produced incomparable self-sacrifice. The Turkish soldier—an oppressed peasant—fought without enthusiasm. The battle-cry of the Caliphs—to spread the gospel of The Prophet among the infidels—was smothered in the vicious tyranny of a relentless autocracy. On the other hand, their opponents, stirred by the cries of anguish of fellow nationals in the Turkish dominions, and till recently themselves slaves, were driven by a passion which broke down all considerations of individual safety.

The declaration of war against Turkey was greeted with wild joy throughout the Greek world. Greek volunteers from Egypt, America, France, Britain, Cyprus, flocked to the colours, and patriotic organisations were formed in all these countries to assist the Greek army financially and with medicines and provisions.

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Contrary to all expectations, the allied offensive met with resounding success. In two brilliant battles at Kirk Kilisse on October 23, and Lule Burgas on October 29–31, the Bulgarians routed the Turkish army. Ten days after the declaration of war, the Turkish armies were in full flight in Thrace. General Savov diverted an army to invest Adrianople, while with his main forces he began to attack the fortified lines of Chatalja—the first defensive line of Constantinople. What was left of the Ottoman armies were thrown back and bottled up in the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Meanwhile, the Third Serbian Army occupied Novi Bazar, and the Second Army, Pristina, thus controlling the railway line from Uskub to Novi Bazar. The First Serbian Army, under the command of Crown Prince Alexander, after a three days' battle,

defeated the Turks at Koumanovo. Then, in a brilliant advance, they drove the oppressors to Monastir, where an army of 40,000 defenders surrendered to the Serbians on November 18.

On the battlefields, the allies combined their resources against Turkey, while at sea it fell on Greece to clear the Aegean of Turkish troopships. Soon after the outbreak of hostilities, the Greek naval officer, Nicolaos Votsis, entered the harbour of Salonika and at close range torpedoed and sank the Turkish battleship *Fethi-Boulen*. This was a great blow to Turkey, as it deprived her of one of her best battleships. The Greek fleet then proceeded to liberate the Aegean Islands. The Turkish fleet was cleared out of the Aegean and driven into the Sea of Marmora. Constantinople could not reinforce her European armies with divisions from her Asiatic mainland. With the loss of the command of the sea, the Turkish Government was helpless. They saw their armies crumbling and surrendering in Europe, while in Syria and Arabia the bulk of their forces were condemned to witness defeat.

The Greeks sent a small army to Epirus with Jannina as the objective. The main force, under the command of the Crown Prince Constantine, invaded Thessaly. After a sharp encounter at Elassona, and a fierce battle at Sarantaporon, the Greek armies rapidly advanced into Macedonia, with Monastir as the objective, hoping to be able to forestall the Serbs. This movement was primarily dictated by strategic considerations.

Venizelos in Athens was informed, through his secret service, of a curious *volte-face* in Bulgarian strategy. The Bulgarian Government, afraid of the international complications which would result from the occupation of Constantinople, ordered their armies to halt at Chatalja. Instructions were sent to the commander of the Macedonian expeditionary force to advance towards Salonika at once. This sudden change seriously alarmed Venizelos. Salonika was coveted by both, and Austria-Hungary was lurking in the background, sullen and apprehensive. He learnt with dismay of Constantine's intention to march to Monastir. He lost no time; in the middle of the night he got into touch with the King by telegraph, asking him to prevail on his son to alter his route and to "advance immediately and energetic-

ally towards Salonika. Political reasons demand the occupation of Salonika. Without it all other acquisitions are worthless." His appeal had the urgency of a command, and he impressed upon the King that he would hold the Crown Prince responsible for any movement that delayed the occupation of Salonika even by one hour. The King succeeded in persuading the Crown Prince, who still insisted on the necessity of marching to Monastir, to change his plans and on November 9, after five centuries, the Greek forces occupied the city. In less than twenty-four hours, General Theodorov, with the Comitadji chief, Sandansky, entered Salonika as allies. Shortly afterwards, the Bulgarian Princes, Boris and Cyril, joined them. A most remarkable situation followed. Venizelos, in order to establish Greek sovereignty over the city, asked the King to take up his residence there. The Bulgarians, on the other hand, with the two Princes at the head, acted as co-owners, and under cover of the "alliance" prolonged their stay, giving it the appearance of permanency.

After less than six weeks' fighting, the Balkan States, united for the first time in their tortuous history, swept from the field the Turkish forces in Europe. Except for the few miles round Constantinople, the great fortress of Adrianople which lay isolated and besieged by the Bulgarians, assisted later on by the Serbians, and Epirus, now at the mercy of the Greek armies, Turkey in Europe was no more. The power that for half a thousand years was the dread of Europe was crumbled and crushed. Constantinople was full of refugees and wounded soldiers. The food supply was disorganised. Cholera and typhus were adding to the hecatomb of slaughter. Soon the last citadels were falling under the irresistible blows of the victors. Defeat was complete and definite. The European chancelleries, which a few weeks previously were verbally guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Turkey, under the stern lesson of war, transferred their sympathies to the victors. Turkey was faced with complete annihilation.

On December 3, an armistice was signed at Chatalja by Turkey and the three Slav States. Greece continued the hostilities. Venizelos was unwilling to let the destiny of his country depend upon the goodwill of the Powers. Without previous military occupation he knew that it was impossible for the Greek

Government to ask and receive Epirus. A meeting of the five, to discuss provisional arrangements for a treaty of peace, was held in London at St. James's Palace in the middle of December. A parallel meeting of the ambassadors of the Great Powers was held in London, under the presidency of Sir Edward Grey.

Division soon became apparent among the Powers. Austria-Hungary had coveted an outlet to the Aegean through the Balkan Peninsula, and the Montenegrin and Serbian conquests now deprived her of that possibility. With the upsetting of the Ottoman Empire, the precarious European balance was destroyed. New situations had arisen. New alliances were sought. The newly strengthened Balkan States were canvassed to subscribe to one or other of the antagonistic European policies. Austria, assisted by Italy, opposed a Serbian outlet to the Adriatic, and championed the formation of an autonomous Albanian State whose independence had already been proclaimed by Ismail Kemal Bey at Valona and almost immediately recognised by the Great Powers. Austro-Italian action was also inspired by fear of Russian influence extending over the peoples of the Peninsula. England, although an ally of Russia, supported Russia's opponents in this respect as it was considered that English Mediterranean policy would be menaced by the establishment of a single influential block over the Balkan Peninsula.

The defeated Turks were unwilling to compromise. Although on January 22 the Grand Council at Constantinople accepted the view of the Turkish Government that peace was necessary and appeared ready to accept the advice of the Powers, the party of resistance got the upper hand, and on the following day a revolution broke out.

Enver Bey, the hero of 1908, who had returned from fighting the Italians in Libya, was the leader of the revolution. Nazim Pasha, the Commander-in-Chief, was murdered, and Kamil Pasha was forced to resign. Once again, the Young Turks returned to power. Negotiations came to an end and war began again in earnest on February 3, 1913. The Greek fleet occupied the islands of Lemnos, Thasos, Imbros, Samothrace, Nicaria, Mitylene, Chios, Samos and certain smaller islands. Only the temporary title given to Italy by the Treaty of Ouchy prevented

the occupation of the Dodecanese. Admiral Countouriotis blocked the Dardanelles. In March the Greek armies occupied Jannina, where the entire Turkish garrison were made prisoners. The Bulgarians kept hammering mercilessly at the fortified lines at the narrowest point of the Peninsula of Gallipoli, constructed by British engineers during the Crimean war. On March 26, the Turkish fortress of Adrianople surrendered to the combined Bulgarian and Serbian forces. At last, the Turks, defeated everywhere, were forced to accept the intervention of the Powers. The following basis for the renewal of the negotiations was accepted:—

- (1) A frontier line from Ainos to Midia, which would follow the course of the Maritza, and the cession to the allies of all territories west of that line with the exception of Albania, whose status and frontiers would be decided upon by the Powers.
- (2) The question of the Aegean Islands to be left to the decision of the Powers.
- (3) Abandonment of Crete by Turkey.
- (4) Arrangements of all financial questions at Paris by an international commission on which the representatives of Turkey and the allies would be allowed to sit. Participation of the allies in the Ottoman Debt and in the financial obligations of the territories newly acquired. No indemnity of war in principle.
- (5) End of hostilities immediately after the acceptance of this basis of negotiations.

Once more, the delegates met in London. Venizelos represented Greece. He soon established himself at the Conference as a formidable diplomatic debater. The Powers attempted all conceivable formulae regarding the Aegean Islands which would nominally guarantee Turkish sovereignty over them. Venizelos took the line that the Aegean Islands were inhabited by Greeks, that they had been conquered by the Greek fleet, and, therefore, belonged to the victorious allies. Endless discussions followed, but in the end Venizelos carried his point that the Aegean Islands were to be ceded to the Balkan States. The allies, under

Venizelos's spur, refused to relinquish the possibility of an indemnity.

As regards the question of Epirus, Venizelos was not equally successful. The creation of an Albanian State and the provisional delimitation of its boundaries had already caused difficulties between Austria and Serbia in the north and Greece and Italy in the south. Austria, robbed of prospective conquests at the expense of Turkey, sought to preserve the Adriatic coastline against Slavic influence. Italy supported Austria in her claims against Serbia, and, in return, Italy was supported by Austria against Greece. Italy was against allowing Greece to establish herself on the other side of the Straits of Otranto, and the French support of the Greek cause aroused even more the suspicions of the Italians, who were afraid lest North Epirus and Corfu might become bases for an attack upon the Apulian coast. While hostilities were still in progress, the Italian Ambassador informed Venizelos that Greece would forfeit Italian friendship if she intended to occupy Valona. Now the Italians demanded that the Greek frontier in Epirus must be drawn as far south as Cape Stylos opposite the town of Corfu. Venizelos argued, fighting every inch of ground, pointing out the fallacy of the Italian theory about the strategic importance of the Epirote coast. He demanded Greek sovereignty over this area, "sanctified by history and by conquest," as he termed it, but as the opposition remained adamant, he offered in turn either to neutralise the coast, or to hold a plebiscite under international supervision, for the inhabitants to decide as to what national state they wished to belong. All was in vain. The Italians, supported by Austria, prevailed over the other powers, who were unwilling to risk an open rift for the support of Greece.

Equally tenacious was Venizelos's insistence upon the transference of the Dodecanese to the Greek kingdom. Giolitti, confronted with historic facts, ventured the statement that Italy "could not pretend to annex territories of Greek nationality," but pleaded the indeterminate character of peace between Italy and Turkey to justify temporary Italian occupation. Sir Edward Grey declared on that point that Great Britain's interest was that the Dodecanese "should not be claimed or retained by any of

the Great Powers.” It is, perhaps, slightly ironical that the Twelve Islands are still, to this day, Italian territory.

After protracted negotiations a definite treaty of peace was signed with Turkey on May 30, 1913. The Sultan ceded to the Governments of the allies all his dominions in Europe except the small strip of territory round Constantinople from Ainos on the Aegean to Midia on the Black Sea. To the Great Powers was left the decision of the status and frontiers of Albania and that of the islands of the Aegean Sea.

So far, the Balkan League had justified itself. Two years previously, when the germ of that idea began to generate in the brain of Venizelos, nobody could have foreseen such rapid and splendid results. It was conceived as an instrument of defence against an aggressive oppressor. It quickly deviated into an alliance. War was intended as its natural climax. But the fact that the alliance was formed in an atmosphere of deeply rooted diffidence when results from an offensive war were not expected—or, at least, not on such an embarrassing scale—left the negotiators without those safeguarding formulæ which would ensure a working peace. The gamblers won. Now came the crucial division—who should have the biggest spoils? Bulgaria wanted the lion’s share and so did Greece and Serbia. Peace was signed. Turkey was vanquished and bleeding. The fight for freedom—national freedom—had blazed its meteoric course over the Balkan lands. Was it real? Could it endure? Already the sky was overcast!

In London, Venizelos spoke eloquently of the alliance. He praised the valour of the Greek armies and that of his allies. “Greece,” he said, “now needed peace to reconstruct herself.” But on his return home he appeared sombre and thoughtful. In London he had received a foretaste of the inexorable determination of the Powers to maintain the balance of power at the expense of the small peoples. The Italy of Mazzini and Garibaldi turned against Greece. Signor Giolitti forgot during his London outbursts that several hundreds of his compatriots of the Garibaldi Battalion gave their lives in the battles of Bizani to liberate Greece in the spirit of the immortal Italian patriot. What perturbed him most was the attitude of Bulgaria. The prospect

of renewed Balkan antagonism was gloomy enough. Over-shadowing everything else was the undecided question of Salonika.

In Athens, he was greeted with a welcome in which practically the whole adult population of the city took part. His popularity increased to heroic dimensions. He was acclaimed as the leader and saviour of Hellas. But side by side with him the figure of Constantine loomed equally great.

CHAPTER VI

FRIENDS FALL OUT

BEFORE the conclusion of the treaty of peace with Turkey, discord arose between the allies. The Bulgarian forces in Salonika acted as if they were the real rulers of the city. The position was one of dual authority. Venizelos tolerated this throughout the winter and spring, anxious to avoid friction while the armies were still in the field.

But with the signing of the armistice the situation changed. The changes of war gave way to a situation which demanded concrete administration. Dual authority—and in the circumstances, military dual authority—could not become an efficient working administration. Worse still, it could not be tolerated. Venizelos was determined to have the issue thrashed out with the Bulgarians, but the latter skilfully avoided any reference bearing on the question. The Bulgarians had no case—at least none which could be publicly debated. The Greeks, on the other hand, had not placed all their cards on the table. The Greek attitude on the question of the alliance and the war was given by Venizelos in a conversation with one of his journalistic mouthpieces when Venizelos asked him to write a series of articles preparing the people psychologically for war:

"When I heard that my services were required for war I was astounded. So we are heading for war, Mr. President?" I inquired.

"Yes," was Venizelos's answer. "Turkey will not accept the reforms which we demand from her. Constantinople will reject our note and the only alternative to that is war."

"Are we in agreement with the other Balkan States?"

"Certainly!"

"Are you in no doubt as to the results of the war, Mr. President?"

"Why should we be afraid? Greece alone cannot face Turkey. A duel between the two states means suicide for us. 1897 was

a folly. I never act foolishly. If now four states together cannot defeat Turkey, well, we shall never be able to do so in the future."

"What responsibilities do we undertake?"

"We shall place one hundred thousand men in the field and assist with our navy."

"Who is our ally?"

"Bulgaria. Our alliance is purely defensive!"

"What do we get in case of victory?" further inquired the journalist. "Have we got any agreement with Bulgaria?"

Venizelos laughed. "*We do not need agreements!*"

"And what about the Powers?"

"The Powers will respect the verdict of victory. There is no doubt about that."

Further, Venizelos revealed that the only other person in Greece aware of the alliance was King George I, at the moment on holiday in Europe. The King, though he had approved of the alliance in principle, was opposed to war with Turkey. But on his return Venizelos met him at Corinth and, before they arrived in Athens, he persuaded him about the inevitability of war and the certainty of victory for the allies. The King told Venizelos that while in Vienna he learnt from official sources that the Emperor Franz Joseph and his Chancellor were strongly against anybody occupying Salonika, because they looked upon it as future Austrian territory. Naturally, he was in a dilemma. "What if in attacking Turkey we have to meet the Austrian army also? I have the cruel memories of 1897," he concluded, "that is why I am hesitant."

"Your Majesty," rejoined Venizelos, "we are a constitutional Government responsible to the people and representing the people and *we* assume the full responsibility of war. . . . You must banish all hesitation. I assure you that in a month's time you will take up your residence in Salonika. *And once we are there, nobody will be able to turn us out.*"¹

Venizelos's belief in victory was fanatical. He saw with remarkable foresight that any postponement would tell against a precarious alliance; Turkey was torn asunder by factional strife. Delay would give her time to reorganise herself and

¹ Stefanou: *Athenaika Nea*, March 20, 1916.

strengthen her fighting forces. The military tentatively advised against a winter war in the bitter Balkan climate. But spring would have been too late!

Symptomatic of the "earnestness" of spirit with which the alliance was concluded was his contentious reference to any agreement regulating the sharing out of the territories to be acquired.

After victory had been achieved and even before the treaty of peace was signed distrust had come to the surface. Bulgaria was determined to have Salonika and Venizelos was determined not to surrender it. But the latter's determination was tempered with conciliation as he wanted above all to arrive at some understanding with Bulgaria at the expense even of territorial sacrifice elsewhere—but not of Salonika.

* * *

King George of Greece, while taking his usual walk in Salonika on the afternoon of March 18, accompanied by a single aide-de-camp, was fired upon and killed by a Greek named Schinas. It was officially given out that the assassin was a mentally deranged person who killed the King because on some previous occasion he was refused a favour. Constantine, fresh from his victories in Macedonia and Epirus, ascended the throne. The new King had nothing of his father's suavity and culture, and neither of those two matchless virtues for a constitutional King—"no opinions" and "affected indifference." He was, on the contrary, too angular: a misfit for a position of titular symbol. He had definite views, crystallised in Prussian form, and some queer notions about the divine rights of Kings.

His recent victories made him the idol of the people. Popular fancy weaved round him a legendary fabric of actions which raised him almost to the position of mythical hero. A none too scrupulous Press had been partly responsible. Round him soon rallied those military and other elements who were driven from active political influence by the revolution of 1909. His accession strengthened the military party—or more correctly, the adventurous militarists of the army.

These elements, drunken by victory, demanded the forcible ejection of the Bulgarians from Salonika. They began to

advocate a separate policy from that of the central Government, by which all Greek-inhabited territories under the allies would revert to the Greek kingdom. Venizelos, answering these critics and with an eye to placating possible Serbian and Bulgarian misgivings, said in the Chamber on March 15, "I am aware that there are some who are trying to stir up trouble among the Greek population who without question will remain outside the frontiers of Greater Greece. I, gentlemen, who have been only a few years among you, have come to the conclusion that in three years there has been a tremendous change in the soul of the Greek people. Not everyone sees it, but it is so great that it permits, nay, it compels the responsible head of the Greek Government to tell the truth to the people. None of us can hope to realise all our aspirations. I trust that the patriotism of all the Balkan nations will be so lofty that public opinion will not shrink from such sacrifices as will be inevitable if the partition is to ensure the continuance of the alliance—even if those who see clearly are called traitors by fervid patriots of their own race." It was in this sense that a *modus vivendi* could be achieved—by reciprocal sacrifice and curbing of nationalistic exuberance. But the cavalcade of events moved fast.

In Bulgaria, Tsar Ferdinand found himself at the head of a reformed and strengthened military party—or Macedonian party (as a good number of the officers in the Bulgarian army were of Macedonian extraction). Gueshov's handling of foreign affairs did not satisfy them. He was accused of seeing the Greek point of view, in fact, of seeing it too well. He had, therefore, to go. His successor, Dr. Danev, an energetic but subservient person, readily resigned himself to be the tool of the Military League. In Gueshov, Venizelos lost a friend and a man of intellect and understanding. The new Premier during the London negotiations made a point of embarrassing his Greek colleagues and avoiding any direct conversation bearing on Greco-Bulgarian relations. Venizelos, both covertly and overtly, broached the question several times, but could evoke no acknowledgment. He knew that the Balkan question involved vital interests and policies of the Powers, and that it was a matter of urgency that the differences between the allies should be

settled amicably. His ministers in Rome and Vienna were sending him alarming reports about Italian machinations in Albania and about an impending Austrian mobilisation against Serbia and Russia. He saw the storm clouds gathering over the Peninsula and believed that Greece should content herself with only that which was indispensable to her, in order to adjust her differences with Bulgaria in a friendly spirit.

In London one day, Dr. Danev visited the Greek Premier in order to discuss with him the question of breaking off the Conference, as the Turks had exhausted the patience of their opponents by endless and ineffectual tergiversation. "When we had finished, M. Danev rose to leave," relates Venizelos. "I said to him point blank, as we are alone let us talk about Salonika." Much embarrassed and on tenterhooks, M. Danev replied, "This is hardly the moment."

"Still we have a little time in which to settle the foundations of our future discussions."

"I have received no instructions from my Government; I know nothing about the business." At this point, I could not resist saying sharply, "Let us talk seriously and try to arrange matters."

"With pleasure," answered Dr. Danev, "but Salonika is at this moment in the hands of the armies. Politics have nothing to do with it now; we will speak of it after peace has been signed with Turkey."

"We were both standing near the door. Summoning all my self-control, I replied, 'Salonika is not in the hands of the armies, but under the Government of the King of Greece. Salonika belongs to Greece by historical right and by the right of conquest. And I can tell you this; Greece will consent to any other sacrifice in order to maintain the Balkan Alliance, but give up Salonika—never'."¹ Danev, hardly maintaining his diplomatic sang-froid, left, slamming the door behind him. The act was symbolic. The question remained closed. It passed from the hands of the political representatives into the uncompromising hands of the militarists. Had Danev accepted the invitation and discussed the problem, there might have possibly been an understanding.

¹ Kerofilas: *Eleutherios Venizelos*, pp. 102-103.

The second Balkan war would not have taken place and the history of south-eastern Europe would have been different.

Serbia, deprived of the Adriatic coastline by the joint action of Italy and Austria-Hungary, felt justified in not honouring her treaty with Bulgaria. She refused to cede the territories occupied by her armies to Bulgaria, to whom they belonged by virtue of a bilateral agreement. The Press, in its haste to prepare the ground for an opposite feeling to that of national honour, hinted that Bulgaria did not carry out the obligations laid down by the treaty because a Serbian army assisted in the siege of Adrianople. The Bulgarian army was attacked, and public opinion was carefully and methodically prepared for a rupture. Nothing could have been more short-sighted than this artificially fanned enmity. The Balkan rulers proved capable of hatching a successful conspiracy, but failed when victory came and put them to the test.

All these factors arraigned against the fragile structure of an understanding reached for its expediency, proved too much for the statesmen. Venizelos was sincere in his desire for the maintenance of peace. Unfortunately, his relations with Bulgaria became daily more difficult. Peace was signed, but across their uncertain frontier outposts the Greek and Bulgarian soldiers faced each other in a state of gloomy preparedness.

Venizelos's sole desire was to salvage the spoils of victory from the Bulgarian menace. He first inquired from the High Command what were the prospects of a Greek war with Bulgaria or of a Greco-Serbian war with Bulgaria. To the first, the answer was "hopeless" and to the second that there was a sixty per cent. possibility of victory. He set to work. Sudden Bulgarian action must be counteracted by military vigilance, in alliance with Serbia. He invited the Greek Minister in Belgrade and the Serbian Minister at Athens to Salonika and, after long consultations, a military alliance with Serbia was drawn up and signed. The alliance was both defensive and offensive, signed for a period of ten years. The respective frontiers between the two countries were agreed upon. Agreement was by no means easy. When frontiers were under discussion the Greek military party was inclined to be as intractable as their enemies. The General

Staff wanted Monastir. Venizelos had to convince the King that sacrifice was absolutely necessary in order to safeguard what they already possessed. Serbia would be alienated by such an attitude, and where would Greece be if, by obstinacy and tactlessness, Serbia was forced into the arms of Bulgaria? Eventually he succeeded in persuading them, but not before their determined obstinacy engendered legitimate fears amongst the Serbian Staff, which, in turn, had to make arrangements against Bulgarian aggression and against the possibility of Greek treachery.

With the alliance, the spectre of débâcle disappeared from the Greek horizon. Venizelos did not pin his faith on this alone, but sought, while there was still time, to normalise relations with Bulgaria. He sought to utilise the influence of the Russian Minister in Sofia for an understanding. M. Necludov relates in his memoirs that he found the Greek Prime Minister a "scrupulously honest politician" who "promptly and without any preliminaries broached the principal question—that of Greco-Bulgarian demarcation." The Greek claims in that respect were explicit. Briefly, Greece must have Salonika and part of the hinterland to assure the strategic safety of the city. "What is bad," Venizelos concluded the interview, "and what makes me anxious is the fact that nothing on earth would induce the Bulgarians to enter into negotiations as we have repeatedly suggested they should do. They always elude the subject as if they were on the watch for fresh occurrences or some new situation; and yet amongst us, public opinion is very much disturbed by the tone of the Bulgarian Press, which even disputes our possession of Salonika." Nothing emerged out of the interview.

In vain were his attempts to win the Bulgarians as also were his denunciations of those of his own countrymen, who were bent upon aggrandisement at the risk of national safety. A memorandum was presented in Parliament in March from the Greeks of Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, including the Greek towns of Serres, Drama and Kavalla, which Venizelos was prepared to see incorporated in Bulgaria, demanding to become part of the Greek kingdom. The opposition attacked the

Government's policy bitterly. "It is treachery to the unredeemed Hellenes! Such are the declarations of the liberator!" cried Theotokes. Venizelos, his mind set upon a Balkan alliance which offered the only way of escape from the hideous strife that had torn asunder the peoples of the Peninsula, answered:—

"It is natural that difficulties should have arisen as to the division of conquered territory. Everyone knows how strong national exclusiveness is. Each nation that has shared in the struggle for freedom, impelled by the national instinct, tries to obtain as large a share as possible. Each, in good faith, claims to have contributed most to the common cause. But the truth is different. All have contributed their utmost. Each one of the allied nations has concentrated all its resources, moral and material, to achieve a result which would never have been won otherwise. I am convinced that the partition will not be made by the military authorities, who have a limited horizon and look at matters from a merely military point of view, not by the too fervid patriots of this state or that, but by the responsible governments of these states."

Unfortunately, no Government was immune from the influence of their military authorities. Sporadic Bulgarian attacks multiplied during June and on the 30th of that month, General Sava Savov, who had showed exceptional bravery and skill earlier in the year before Boulair, hurled his forces against his former allies in a sudden and unannounced offensive. Tsar Ferdinand ordered this sudden general attack without the knowledge of his Government. The Bulgarians perpetrated an inexcusable blunder. While preparing against Greece and Serbia they were indifferent to Rumania's designs against themselves. They did not attempt to guard their northern frontier successfully, to try to ensure Rumania's neutrality.

For the moment, the Bulgarian attack caught its rivals by surprise, but both Governments and armies had foreseen such an eventuality. As soon as the news reached Salonika, the Greek General Staff ordered the Bulgarian troops, still jointly garrisoning the town, to lay down their arms and leave within two hours. The ultimatum was rejected and a siege of the houses began and continued until the Greek artillery forced the survivors to

surrender. A general advance of the Greek army, under the command of the King, began the next day. The initial Bulgarian successes were quickly followed by reverses. In the space of a few days, the feeling of hatred, bottled up for three years, was let loose and fanned in an ugly and angry fashion. The Greeks attacked with reckless fury at Kilkish, and the Bulgarians resisted with equally reckless courage. Wave upon wave of infantry were thrown against the fortified positions, and on the third day the Bulgarians were dislodged at the point of the bayonet. The Serbs scored triumphantly in a three days' battle on the River Bregalnitz. Soon the Bulgarian armies were retreating, but contesting valiantly every inch of ground.

Upon the outbreak of hostilities, Venizelos sent a commission to investigate Bulgarian atrocities in Macedonia and to report immediately. He knew the value of propaganda. The commission with miraculous celerity produced a report which was a ghastly record of atrocities. It was translated into several languages and proved of enormous value in arousing world opinion. Actually the report—produced at such speed—was more of a reflection of the prevalent psychological mood of the combatants than a compilation of crimes. Crimes did indeed occur, but were not confined to one side.

More slaughter was crowded into the first days of this war than had occurred during the whole period of the war with Turkey. On July 11, Rumania marched into Bulgarian territory and, proceeding without resistance, annexed the Province of Dobrudja. Without firing a shot, the Rumanian advance stopped only twelve miles outside Sofia. The Turks, profiting by the quarrel of their enemies, marched into Thrace and occupied Adrianople, where Enver rode at the head of the column as "victor"!

Tsar Ferdinand, attacked from four sides, realised that continuance of hostilities meant the end of Bulgaria and, for him, the end of his dynasty. He begged the King of Rumania to suggest an armistice to the Greeks and Serbs, and at the same time, to act as mediator. Carol accepted gladly. His *coup de main* was not only successful, but had been accepted by the Bulgarians. One of the purposes of Rumanian intervention was the preservation of the balance of power in the Balkans, which had been

threatened by Bulgarian aggrandisement. The Rumanians had no desire to see a great Greece or Serbia in its place.

When King Constantine received King Carol's telegram, he informed Venizelos that for military reasons hostilities ought not to cease. He refused to elucidate his reasons to Venizelos's remonstrations, covering himself with the excuse of "the requirements of strategy." The Greek victories had already covered more than the territorial claims. Any further advance entailed unnecessary bloodshed and grave risks. The King was adamant. Venizelos's proposed telegram of acknowledgment consenting to an armistice was rejected. "Though I know (it stated) Bulgarian perfidy, and I am not absolutely sure that the request for peace is genuine . . . I accept your Majesty's intercession, trusting that the Greek interests will find a just advocate in your person during the negotiations for peace." Rumanian support was indeed necessary for Greece, but the High Command was obdurate and impervious, demanding peace at the point of the sword and refusing outside diplomatic assistance. Nor would the King accept the suggestion of publicly stating "that military reasons made the continuation of hostilities imperative" in declining an armistice.

Not until Venizelos was in Bucharest did the King gradually come to accept his point of view, and this just in the nick of time. Already the Serbians, astounded by the Greek victories, had halted, fortified themselves, and fearing lest Greek successes might mean a third war between them, withdrew their forces for the protection of Monastir. On the afternoon of the day that Venizelos vainly urged the acceptance of the proposed armistice, the Bulgarians began a counter-attack against both wings of the Greek army. The Greeks had outrun their lines of communication and were fighting on foreign territory with a hostile population at their rear. They could do nothing else but retreat, with possible defeat to follow. Armistice saved the situation. The King, referring to it later, said that the policy of Venizelos at this juncture was right "not only from the political and diplomatic point of view, but also from the purely military point of view."

On August 10, 1913, the Treaty of Bucharest was signed, securing for Greece Salonika, Serres, Drama and Kavalla.

Bulgaria accepted the Serbian and Rumanian claims almost without discussion, but as regards Greece, she refused to accept the cession of Eastern Macedonia. Not until after many heated discussions did the Bulgarians accept the defeat which to them became a painful injustice and was to be the mainspring of Bulgarian policy in years to come. Many foreign correspondents in Bucharest at the time wrote that Venizelos was acting against the interests of his country by his excessive demands, and that he had subordinated his policy to that of his King. Many years later, when it was possible for him to throw any blame there might have been on the King, he defended his action in the Greek Chamber, as follows:—

"It was not possible to make any concession on the question of Kavalla. Not because I should not have been justified in public opinion, but because I could not be sure that, if I sacrificed Kavalla, I should be in a position to secure peace for the Balkans. If I had been sure of this, I do not hesitate to say even now that I should have made the sacrifice. But I know as a matter of fact that if I gave up Kavalla the effect would have been to stimulate Bulgarian greed which would only be stronger and would put the Bulgarians in a more advantageous position for aggression when they thought they could attack us."

Greece emerged from the Treaty of Bucharest with almost double the territory she had had before the first Balkan war. Her Eastern frontier was pushed to the River Mesta; Thessaly, Southern Epirus and Southern Macedonia were incorporated in her territories.

"The country is grateful to you," King Constantine telegraphed as soon as the treaty was signed. Venizelos was touched. He showed the telegram to the officials of the Embassy and the delegation, mumbling "Constantine is good," "The King is good," while tears rolled down his cheeks.

He was easily moved to tears. No successful Balkan politician has ever failed to use the weapon of tears. But those of Venizelos were often genuine. By nature sensitive, he was nicknamed by his friends as the "Greek Parsifal."

As soon as the signatures were put to the final document at Bucharest, Venizelos walked with sombre dignity across the Hall

and, sympathetically and warmly, shook hands with the chief Bulgarian delegate, M. Rodeslavov, and whispered something to him about "the fortunes of war."

* * *

In Bucharest, the Balkan League was interred unceremoniously. The alliance which had put an end to Ottoman tyranny did not evoke a passing expression of regret. No one could foresee what those few months between the two Balkan wars really augured for the allies. From this distance, the breaking up of the Balkan League can be recognised as an historical calamity. Division once again reared its ugly head. Foreign Powers, eager to exploit differences, found a welcome opportunity. Soon the clouds of war were to burst and the divided friends were to be swept hither and thither in the angry current of invasion.

It is to the credit of Venizelos that he strove hard to preserve the alliance. But, even so, his attempts at a peaceful solution were not inspired by foresight of impending danger, but by doubt as to the results of the war. He entered the Greco-Serbian alliance reluctantly and not until he saw that the door to a Greco-Bulgarian understanding was definitely shut. His insistence on exploring all existing channels for an equitable settlement was made exceedingly difficult, not only by repeated Bulgarian attacks, but also by the Greek military party, headed by the King and certain Cabinet Ministers who urged war with Bulgaria. Stratos, forced to resign from the Cabinet because of his intransigent attitude, accused Venizelos of having subordinated Greek to Bulgarian interests, and that he had been thrown into "complete despair by the repeated aggressions of the Bulgarians during the month of May in the district of the Panghaeon." To shrink from war was an offence in the eyes of the political nonentities. In later years, when the chorus of hatred against Venizelos among the Royalists was in full blast, they tried to make much out of this. He was accused of intending to sacrifice Greek territory in order to reconcile the traditional enemy, and it was claimed that but for the patriotic action of the King, Greece would have always remained at the mercy of Bulgaria. His answer to Stratos's attack was that the favourable result of the

war did not make him regret having dreaded it, a statement which was taken as an admission of cowardice. His rejoinder after his return to power in 1917 is worth noting. "Attempts have been made," he said to the Chamber, "to make it appear that I alone, through fear of the results, disapproved of that war, in opposition to the King and the General Staff, in order that all honour for the success of the war might be attributed to the King and none to the political leader. I am therefore obliged to declare that no difference ever arose between the Crown and the military authorities on the one hand, and the Government on the other, as regards our policy towards Bulgaria. The reason why no differences arose was because even the military authorities were not by any means without misgivings as to the probable results of the war at that time. You will understand that a responsible minister had no business to precipitate a war in which the chances of success even after our alliance with Serbia were by no means certain, as the General Staff told me."

First to conceive the idea of the alliance, but purely as an alliance and without any idea of promoting unity—against Turkey—he was the last to relinquish it. That it was destroyed in no way detracts from his sincere desire to maintain it as an instrument of peace in south-eastern Europe.

CHAPTER VII

'LULL BEFORE THE STORM'

"IN five years I will regenerate Greece." In much less than that, Venizelos had not only regenerated Greece, but considerably extended her area. A new fire burned in the soul of Hellenism. The "Great Idea" again possessed the popular fancy. There was still Constantinople and Anatolia. Did not popular legend say that Constantinople would be conquered when a Constantine sat on the throne of Greece?¹ Chauvinism was ablaze.

It was certainly a difficult task to keep under control the new restless forces which victory brought to the surface. The elements which were crushed in 1910 re-emerged now as the champions of intransigence. Success was heady wine to them. They started by attacking the Government's policy in the past year or so.

Παρελθοντολογία (speaking of the past) was a cancer of the Greek body politic. Jealousies and enmities, antagonisms and diffused discontents, held the political stage. If there was nothing to quarrel about in present affairs, why not dig up the past!

But, in spite of such (peculiarly Greek) friction, the nation enjoyed a degree of unity and internal peace which it never experienced in its eighty years of previous existence, or since. Politics in Greece, though sometimes originating in interest and reason, are sustained by sentiment which will hear of no compromise. A few years later, the Greek world was to be divided by a cleavage whose depth of senseless hate can only be believed by those who felt or saw it. Persons of the opposite camp came to be looked on as devils personified and avoided like the bearers of a contagious disease. A Venizelist would not buy his daily

¹ Constantinople, then Byzantium, was made the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire by Constantine the Great in the fourth century A.D. and lost to the Turks eleven centuries later by Constantine Paleologue. The legend ran, "Constantine built it, Constantine lost it and Constantine will regain it."

loaf from a Royalist baker, nor would a Royalist enter a café for his customary morning coffee where the proprietor was considered to be a supporter of Venizelos. Faction, as of old, with its primitive brutal undertones, impervious of reason and immersed in the dark morass of base feelings, ruled supreme.

For the moment there was quiet. The feverish preparations of the last three years culminated in undreamt of achievements. Those achievements had been made possible by the subordination of the intractable individuals to the common national cause. Venizelos had round him a team of able and conscientious patriots. In the hour of danger they all pulled together. During this period, none of them allowed his particular grievances to disturb the national equilibrium. And that unity brought results. The internal reorganisation was remarkable, particularly as it was initiated and carried out under conditions of pressure and external danger.

All the innovations and reforms of Venizelos were inspired by academic spirit of liberalism: of gradually and painfully readjusting the world to conform to present needs. No scientific historic knowledge lay behind it, no comprehensive theory; he was simply patching up here and there and groping in the dark to remedy grievances whose causes lay deeper than their symptoms implied. In general, his sympathies were with the people and against the landed aristocrats and the idle rich. Such were his reforms that an English Socialist, Dr. E. J. Dillon, writing in the *Contemporary Review* in 1911, said that to his mind "the reforms of Venizelos meant such a yielding to the anti-plutocratic spirit as will lead to the taxation of the rich for the needy of the state and the relief of the poorer classes. The hopes of a million struggling, despised and wronged working men and women are centred in the present Government."

Industrial legislation made steady progress. The principle of trade unionism was recognised. A law was passed stipulating payment of wages on the spot and interests on wages overdue. A Labour Board was established. Later on, in 1915, the question of working hours was decided by an Act of Parliament regulating the opening and closing of factories and shops. In 1918 labour legislation was implemented by a series of measures: child labour

under twelve was prohibited; women and children were saved from the horrors of mine and quarry labour, and their hours of work in other employments considerably reduced.

In Greece the agricultural population was at the time, and still is, just under three-fourths of the entire population. The Constitution of 1911 provided for the expropriation of the big estates and the installation of farmers and peasants as proprietors. In this respect Venizelos was the only Balkan statesman who not only solved the agrarian problem, but, at the same time, dealt with the problem that arose from the annexation of territories in which, under Ottoman law, the peasants had been little more than serfs, and by constitutional means facilitated the breaking up of feudal holdings and their disposition among the dispossessed. He brought French specialists to teach the peasants how to make and preserve wine, how to fight phylloxera and to assist in fruit cultivation and the draining of the swamps. By premiums and state aid, he encouraged the cultivation of olives. Foreign agricultural engineers and forestry experts were employed. Experiments were made in growing Egyptian and American cotton, and every encouragement was given towards improving the quality of tobacco and developing potato cultivation. In 1910 Greece produced 16,000,000 tons of potatoes; in 1913, 21,000,000; in 1914, 23,000,000; and in 1915, 36,000,000.¹

He encouraged local industry, and particularly commercial shipping, from which a considerable part of the national revenue was derived. These measures brought the commercial classes and small industrialists solidly behind him, while his labour and agricultural laws, particularly those regulating hours of work and expropriating the big landlords, outraged wealthy conservatism. At the time, conservatism, shaken by the revolution of 1909, and devastatingly defeated at the polls by the Liberals, was incapable of any action. In a few years' time, when they found their opportunity in Venizelos's quarrel with the King over the question of Greece entering the war, they attacked him mercilessly, and were only prevented from wrecking his reforms by the salutary intervention of the allies and the banishment of the King.

¹ E. Tsouderos, *Le Relevement Economique de la Grece*, quoted by Gibbons, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

He pursued an active campaign against the bandits, who had infested Greece ever since the wars of liberation. He established an efficient police force on the English model which was later to be instructed and organised by British officers. In the Ministry of Justice, the most important innovations provided for the centralisation of the department's work in Athens; the procedure of civil tribunals was simplified, and measures were taken against the abuses of usury; the old law of detention at will was abrogated and prompt trial with counsel for the accused was provided for. A Ministry of National Economy was established with powers over commerce, industry and agriculture, with the object of restoring Greek finances and developing local economy with the prospect of ultimately excluding foreign financial control. But to achieve this, money was needed. The Powers were willing to help, eager to enlist an ally, and find an outlet for surplus capital. Foreign capital was easy to get in, but proved exceptionally difficult to get rid of!

* * *

Parliament was not in session. At last, for a brief period, Venizelos was able to enjoy a short rest.

Later in the year he visited his native island with the King to attend the installation of the Greek flag. On the battlements of the historic fortress of Firka, standing side by side with the King, he saw the General Commissioner, M. Lucas Roufos, hand the Greek flag to the King, who in turn offered it to the two Cretan veterans Jiannaris and Mantakas, as the representatives of the Cretan people. There were hurrahs and tears, the natural and inevitable outburst of people witnessing the symbol of their liberty. But none could have been more moved than Venizelos, who for twenty years had fought incessantly for that ideal, and had been instrumental in making it a reality.

The King departed the same day for Piraeus, but Venizelos stayed behind. In the evening a celebration was organised in his honour in the house of his friend Markantonaki. He made it a condition that there should be no toasts. There was plenty of drinking and feasting and singing of the monotonous Cretan poems, sung in the low bass Cretan tone which Venizelos loved.

After so many years he was moved at hearing the melancholy traditional melody of his country.

While they were still feasting, Mme. Kyriakoulla appeared in the hall, evidently having been delayed by helping the women-folk in the kitchen to prepare the food. Venizelos, on seeing her, sprang to his feet and toasted "the last comer," while Mme. Kyriakoulla blushed bashfully. Reprimanded by his friends for breaking his own rule, he answered, "But how could I help it, how could I?" Thus, in a festive moment, he revealed a secret which he had treasured for a long time.

Twelve years previously Venizelos had come into close contact with the beautiful widow of one of his friends. Her home used to be a meeting place, a sort of literary salon, where friends occasionally met to discuss events over a cup of coffee or a drink of wine.

He had kept his affair a secret. Only his family knew about it, and none of his friends imagined the real significance of their relations, till now, when, honoured as Prime Minister, he inadvertently revealed it under the influence of drink. Mme. Kyriakoulla insisted that she should go to Athens with him and, at last, succeeded in persuading Venizelos to drop his outworn conventionality and allow her to settle in the capital where he could see her regularly. One of the reasons which prompted him to do that was the embarrassing situation he was involved in with a cultured Athenian lady, Mme. Veloni, who, beginning by admiring Venizelos, grew to love him passionately, and with the characteristic insouciance of her social rank, paraded that love to compromising lengths. Love with a widow or single woman could, under certain circumstances, be tolerated, but conventional morality would have been outraged had he had any love affairs with married women. The installation of Mme. Kyriakoulla in Athens saved him from falling into the snares of physical attraction, which might have been easy during his long widowerhood.

Alone among Balkan statesmen—if not unique among all statesmen—Venizelos was an extremely poor man. His official salary was not enough for a comfortable existence. He was too proud to accept any help. While in Crete, after much pressure,

he consented to allow his wealthy friend M. Benakes to undertake the education of his son, Kyriakos. Benakes intended to send young Venizelos to Lausanne, but when Venizelos became Prime Minister, he cancelled the arrangement, thinking that it was only fitting for the son of the Greek Premier to complete his studies at Athens University.

Once he accepted help, but not when in office. Several of his friends, knowing his difficult financial position, offered to buy him a house in order to save him from endless removals. He accepted, but as the house was a good distance from the Houses of Parliament, he later decided to sell it in order to buy a new one nearer the centre of the city. But in the end the money was not used for the buying of a house, as it was needed for his escape in 1920.

* * *

If the second Balkan war was an error, the Peace of Bucharest was a calamity. The Peninsula was once more a cauldron of hostile nations. Greece, victorious, had to face an embittered and revengeful Bulgaria, and a Turkey emboldened by the capture of Adrianople, its populace seething with hatred against the Greeks of Thrace and Asia Minor.

Friendship had been destroyed, and the only alternative was to build up a balance of power. If one cannot be reconciled with one's neighbour, the alternative is to threaten him with force. Fear and threats have always been handmaids of politics. Venizelos took up this policy determinedly. He brushed aside the objections of the General Staff, and came to terms with Bulgaria on the basis not of friendship, but of victor and vanquished.

A treaty of peace between Greece and Turkey was signed on November 14, 1913; but the two questions of Albania and the Aegean Islands were left to be settled by the Great Powers.

Hardly had the Balkans fought out their quarrels when the two rival European groups turned voraciously upon the helpless combatants.

Early in 1913 the French Minister, M. Zonnart, visited Athens

to attend the funeral of King George.¹ France was disturbed by the death of the King, a trusted friend of the *entente cordiale*, and the accession of Constantine, who was considered Germanophil. The French Minister had a series of conversations with Venizelos in order to clear up the situation. The talks were confidential and no communiqué was issued.

Venizelos, though pestered by journalists, refused to divulge anything of these conversations; but the following day the Athens correspondent of the *New York Herald* visited the French Minister in his hotel. M. Zonnart was very effusive, and without waiting to be questioned, proceeded to outline the conversations briefly, evidently determined to take the initiative and score against the diplomatic intrigues of the Central Powers. Count Von Aehrenthal² had by his policy made the Balkan wars a certainty, and M. Alexander Isvolski's³ machinations had contributed to its success, but the downfall of the Ottoman Empire had disturbed the European equilibrium. "Venizelos," said M. Zonnart, "is looked upon in France as an Englishman. France must take certain soundings; make certain diplomatic explorations; must investigate possible Balkan combinations and assure herself of Greece's friendly attitude to her." And then he added, with apparent pleasure, "M. Venizelos promised me definitely the support of Greece in the event of a European war with these words, 'en case de guerre, tous les ports grécs seraient considérés comme des portes français ou anglais'."

¹ In the murder of the King many more factors were involved than the grievance of a madman. Many rumours about the real instigators of the crime were circulating at the time at Constantinople. The Greek Minister in Constantinople, M. D Kallerges, succeeded in extracting some information from his friend, Baron von Wangenheim, German Ambassador to the Sultan, which suggested connivance of the Austrian Government, who looked upon it as a means of creating trouble between the Balkan allies in order that Austria should march into Saloniaka. The confidential report of M. Kallerges to the Foreign Office relating to the assassination of the King was lost, as was the report of the then Saloniaka magistrate and the equally confidential reports of M N Triantafyllakos. Evidently a large conspiracy was afoot to destroy all evidence which might have led to the disclosure of the culprit, and still the real motives of the crime are shrouded in mystery.

² Foreign Secretary of Austria-Hungary 1906-12.

³ Foreign Secretary of Russia 1906-10. Ambassador to Paris 1910-17.

On hearing of the interview, Venizelos felt indignant at the trick that the French Minister had played him. A confidential conversation was given publicity without his authority, and with the definite purpose of forcing his hand. This was almost blackmail; he could not deny the facts, for he feared he might arouse the hostility of the French Press and the French Minister, upon whose support he particularly relied during the London negotiations with Turkey. But however discourteous the action of the French Minister was, it was a master stroke. It placed Venizelos in a position where it was difficult to turn back. He had to take sides in future and speak openly in favour of the *entente*. This change marks a turning point in Venizelos's career. He began to cultivate the idea that the interests of Greece could be better served by taking a part in European politics and fishing in the troubled waters of rivalries and antagonisms.

A symptom of the new policy was the enforced and strict conformity of Venizelos's actions to French wishes. When King Constantine visited Berlin in the latter half of 1913, where he was received and decorated by the Kaiser, the French Government was naturally perturbed and inquired whether the friendly words of thanks uttered by the King augured any change in the policy of Greece. The French Government distrusted the German-educated King, the brother-in-law of the German Emperor. Venizelos had to explain that there was no change in his policy, and that the King's words were merely expressions of courtesy. But he felt angry both at the ill-timed outburst of the King and at France's narrow political outlook, which demanded that her friends should completely share her dislikes and fears. Venizelos's political affinities were more with England which, though no less imperialistically self-centred, was more tolerant and less exacting in her friendship.

After the strenuous years of preparations and war it was good to enjoy the blessings of peace. Venizelos considered that Greece had realised almost completely her national programme. He looked forward to a period of peace—for at least a generation—and cherished the hope of extensive development, progress and material prosperity. But things turned out differently. Europe became a prey to fears. The interests, financial and commercial,

of the two leading Powers, England and Germany, were in deadly conflict in every quarter of the globe. The Baghdad railway and the Agadir incident were the manifestations of that dangerous policy of drift. Round these two Powers were ranged a constellation of allies driven to them by interests and policy. Russia was at grips with Hungary over the Balkans. France's interests were conflicting with Germany's in the colonies and France's policy was permeated with the idea of *revanche*.

Both the *entente cordiale* between Britain, France and Russia, and the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy opposed the liberation of the Balkans and the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, for different and opposing reasons. Now they sought to bring the states enlarged by that war under their wing. Austro-German policy gradually won the sympathy of Bulgaria and paved the way for Turko-Bulgarian friendship. Russia took Serbia under protection as a buffer against Austrian expansion southwards, and France found in Venizelos a good friend and willing supporter.

Prised apart by these rival outside interests, the gap between the Balkan States grew wider. The two groups of antagonistic states had fallen under the influence of two rival groups of Powers. Venizelos was anxious for Greece to live in peace with Bulgaria, but at the same time, he insisted upon observing the provisions of a revengeful treaty, and did not suggest anything more concrete than the expression of pious wishes for friendship.

Turkey was truculent. On February 13, 1914, the Powers recognised Greek sovereignty over all the islands seized by the Greeks during the war with the exception of Tenedos and Imbros, which were left to Turkey as they commanded the entrance to the Dardanelles. The dispute with the Italians about the Dodecanese was repeatedly shelved, and it was not until after the war that Venizelos negotiated an agreement with Signor Tittoni solving all the outstanding problems between Greece and Italy. According to this treaty all the islands of the Dodecanese were to be handed to Greece with the exception of Rhodes, the cession of which was to be decided by a plebiscite five years after England had thought fit to hand Cyprus to Greece.

This agreement was repudiated a few years later by dictator Mussolini of Italy and the Dodecanese remained in Italian hands.

Turkey refused to accept the decision of the Powers with regard to the islands. The idea was fostered in Constantinople of leaving the Aegean question in suspension to provide a *casus belli* when the time was ripe. For some reason Enver and his friends singled out Greece as their sole enemy. Probably the change of feeling in Bulgaria and her alignment with Berlin-Vienna was one reason, and that Serbia did not have any common frontier with Turkey was another. Thus the full force of Ottoman hatred was directed against Greece. Venizelos was the arch-enemy of Turkey and Islam. His name in the Turkish Press was always accompanied by a stream of abuse. Nothing which could bespatter his personal or political honour was left unsaid, and the fact that his younger brother was born an imbecile was always used as a proof of the questionable sanity of the Greek Prime Minister.

Early in 1914 the anti-Greek movement in Turkey became well defined. Large numbers of Turks who had fled from the liberated territories occupied by the Balkan States flocked to Constantinople and Asia Minor, where the Turkish Government helped to establish them in Greek communities, after depriving the inhabitants of their belongings and in many cases of their nationality. These Greeks were then sent off into Greece or allowed to wander homeless and impoverished in Turkey. The boycott of Greek commerce was renewed, and there was also a general gradual movement initiated by the Government aiming at the total extinction of the Greek population in Turkey. This was particularly grievous to Venizelos, who never forgot the sufferings of the Cretans under Turkey. His lifelong vision of a redeemed Hellenism was stained by the tragic prospect of the disappearance of those he wanted to liberate. The Ottoman Greek commercial class, which was, incidentally, the commercial backbone of Turkey, afforded him great financial support. Such proportions did the pogrom assume by the summer of 1914 that Venizelos thought that some kind of action was necessary. This was made even more serious by Turkey ordering two battleships

from England,¹ and destroyers and submarines from France, in order to regain the mastery of the Aegean. By June, the situation was becoming extremely difficult for Greece, as there were signs of a concurrent move by Bulgaria against her.

Venizelos appealed for Serbian support. The Serbs, while acknowledging their obligations under the Greco-Serbian alliance, pointed out the difficulties which made it almost impossible for them to participate in a third war. However, they lodged a strong protest with the Grand Vizier at Constantinople so as to bluff him into thinking that they were quite prepared to declare war in defence of Greek interests. They also used their diplomatic offices in trying to persuade the other Powers to protest at Constantinople. Venizelos's suggestion to the Powers for a joint naval demonstration in order to force Turkey to respect the decision of the London Treaty was vetoed by Germany and led to nothing. There was only one means of salvation left; immediate and decisive increase of the Greek navy. Venizelos looked round hurriedly and without much delay bought two old American battleships, the *Idaho* and the *Mississippi* which were renamed *Kilkis* and *Lemnos*. The Turks were consequently deprived of any possibility of challenging the Greek fleet successfully.

While Greco-Turkish enmity was approaching a dramatic climax, another ugly situation was developing in Northern Epirus. The Northern Epirotes, with Venizelos's knowledge and clandestine support, declared themselves autonomous. M. Zographos, an ex-Foreign Minister of Greece, was the head of the autonomist movement and M. Karapanos, another Epirote and ex-diplomatist, was his Foreign Secretary. Like the Ulster diehards, these Greek Conservatives sought to maintain their union

¹ These two ships were never delivered to Turkey. The Great War intervened. Here is Winston Churchill's reference to them in his *Aftermath of World Crisis*. "The British fleets had put to sea in battle order. On July 28 I requisitioned both the Turkish dreadnaughts for the Royal Navy. A Turkish transport with five hundred Turkish sailors on board lay in the Tyne ready to take over the first. The Turkish captain demanded delivery of the vessel and threatened to board her and hoist the Turkish flag . . . I gave orders on my own responsibility that this was to be prevented and that any attempt at seizure by the Turks should be resisted if necessary by all force."

with Greece and fight against their inclusion in the Albanian State by force. Many clashes took place between the Albanian military and the autonomists. Behind the lines in Durazzo, Austrian and Italian agents, while fighting viciously for mastery of the young state, were in agreement in urging the adoption of strong measures against Greece, and the situation was daily becoming more dangerous.

Venizelos was assailed from all directions. His support of the autonomists of Epirus had won him the now overt hostility of Italy and Austria. Bulgaria and Turkey were waiting like dogs on a leash. Never was Greece threatened from so many sides simultaneously. Venizelos always looked upon this period as the darkest in his public life. There was no escape from the iron ring of enemies which was steadily closing in.

He accepted with alacrity the suggestion of a direct conference with Turkish representatives at Brussels, and was on his way there when he was informed, in Munich, of Austria's declaration of war against Serbia. Bigger issues were now at stake. Europe had started on its bloody path, and Greece was saved—at least momentarily!

It is the irony of history that small calamities are sometimes saved at the expense of much greater catastrophes.

PART III

"Dismal error! Fearful slaughter!"—*Tennyson.*



CHAPTER VIII

GREECE AND THE GREAT WAR

WAR soon became general. The antagonisms of European Imperialism had reached a point when the European nations could no longer live together in peace. There was only one possible upshot—war, for which every power, secretly and methodically, was preparing.

In this gigantic struggle of rival interests, the small nations had to choose the sides which offered them most. Their independence could not be guaranteed, and when disputes could only be solved by force of arms, there could not possibly be safety in paper protocols. What is a treaty? "A scrap of paper," said Germany arrogantly and marched into Belgium. Two years later it suited the Allies to violate Greek neutrality, but they did so without the Germans' blatant aggressiveness.

The two rival powers were fighting to safeguard and promote their own particular interests. Only incidental attention could be paid to the demands of the smaller states. Greek interests dictated Greek adhesion to the *entente*. None of the *entente* Powers had any claims in the Near East (with the exception of Russia which coveted Constantinople), conflicting radically with Greek aims, while the Germanic drive to the Aegean could only be accomplished at the expense of Greek territories and the eventual reduction of Greece to a vassal state. Furthermore, the definite policy of the Greek Government was the liberation of unredeemed Hellas, and this could be more effectively realised within a general system of alliance. While the immediate interests of the Greek State—internal reorganisation and recon-

struction—demanded the maintenance of neutrality, which was precarious and difficult to preserve, the further aims of the Government were forcing her into war on the side of the Allies.

* * *

At Munich, Venizelos received a telegram from the Serbian Prime Minister, M. Pashich, inquiring about the attitude of Greece in relation to the Austro-Serbian war. He answered that so far as the war with Austria was concerned, the Greek Government needed more information before an answer could be given, and added that in the event of a Bulgarian attack against Serbia, Greece would honour her treaty obligations and come to the assistance of Serbia.

For the moment, he could not possibly go further than that. There might still be time to arrive at some understanding with Bulgaria and Turkey and thus prevent the war from spreading in the Balkans. Back in Athens, however, he learned from a telegram from the Kaiser to King Constantine that Germany had formed an alliance with both Turkey and Bulgaria, and now invited Greece to join that alliance. The invitation was declined on the grounds that the interests of Greece demanded "the observance of absolute neutrality and the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans as created by the Treaty of Bucharest." Venizelos still entertained pious hopes of reconstructing a Balkanic front, but the entrance of the German battleships *Goeben* and *Breslau* into the Dardanelles exploded this pleasant dream. His agents in Constantinople informed him that Turkey was preparing to enter the war.

At a Cabinet Council early in August under the presidency of the King, it was unanimously agreed that the attitude of Greece in the Austro-Serbian conflict would be "one of absolute neutrality as long as Bulgaria and Turkey remained neutral." It becomes evident from the above that the attitude of Greece was conditional upon that of Turkey and Bulgaria. But the escape of the German warships into Turkish ports¹ and their immediate

¹ With the addition of the two warships to the Turkish fleet—under the command of the German Admiral—the naval balance in the Aegean was upset. Of the two ships *Goeben* was a new type of cruiser, very powerful, and faster than any ship of equal displacement in the Mediterranean at the

acquisition by the Turkish Government put quite a different complexion on the question. Turkey now had a relative

time. Their presence in the Sea of Marmora revealed Germany's political interests in the Orient, and at the same time, guaranteed naval supremacy for the Central Powers over the Black Sea. The resultant danger to Greece was naturally great.

While the German warships were in the Aegean, they were refuelled with coal transported from Piraeus by a German steamer. The coal belonged to a German concern, but had been requisitioned by the Greek Government at the outbreak of war. Because of this, permission to coal the two ships was given personally by Venizelos, who complied willingly with the request of the German Embassy in the matter. The German Embassy demanded coal, not for the use of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* but for two German cargo boats, anchored since the outbreak of the war in the harbour of Piraeus.

The escape of the two warships into the Dardanelles has naturally been considered as one of the decisive factors in prolonging the war. The Black Sea passed definitely under the naval control of the Central Powers. Mr. Winston Churchill takes this as an instance round which to weave the web of "chance" and "fate" which constitutes essentially the fabric of his war narrative. The Churchillian "imponderable balances" were not, in this case, as in many others, adjusted by mystic chance, but by the weight of errors and blunders.

Venizelos received part of the blame for aiding the German warships to escape. The then Greek Foreign Minister, M. Streit, expressed his bewilderment later on as to why Venizelos failed to inform him about this. Venizelos relates the historic occurrence as follows:—

"On the night of August 5, 1914, I received a telephone call from the German Minister asking my permission for the coaling of two German steamers anchored at Piraeus and ready to sail. He made no hint of either the *Goeben* or the *Breslau* and I suspected nothing myself. I granted the required permission and forwarded the necessary order to the port authorities, through a messenger sent for this purpose by the German Embassy. The two German steamers were to depart and had the right to as much fuel as was necessary to take them to the nearest German port. In this respect my action was not only right, but, in view of the circumstances, necessary. As regards the contention of the Foreign Minister, I find it entirely baseless. With the order of requisition still in force, the act of coaling was a question of local jurisprudence. It was not a case of interpreting a clause of international law, but one of administrative action. That is why the German Minister applied to me and not to the Foreign Secretary."

The German Minister lied about the destination of the demanded coal, but even had he informed Venizelos about it, the latter could not possibly have refused. The two German warships were at war when in Greek waters. Greece was a neutral country. According to the ruling of the Greek jurist and diplomat M. N. Politis, "under Article 19 of the XIII Convention of the Hague of 1907 Greece was at liberty to allow their coaling only once." This she did. Had Venizelos known the facts at the time, he would still have granted permission for coaling, but as a neutral, he could have informed the Allies about it, with the result that the German warships might have been destroyed while coaling.

supremacy in the Aegean, and could easily undertake the initiative of attack. Greece was without support or allies. French and British diplomats were parleying at Constantinople, endeavouring to win Turkish support. Consequently, the attitude of the *entente* towards Greece was one of frigid diplomatic politeness which offered no scope for friendship, let alone of assistance. The Serbians had their hands full in fighting Austria and could not possibly give any military support. Again Greece was alone, helpless, facing her powerful hereditary enemy!

By a master stroke of genius, Venizelos saved the situation without outwardly compromising the policy of his Government. When the German tidal wave was relentlessly pushing on towards Paris, and the French nation and Government were on tenterhooks of agonising suspense, Venizelos officially declared, with the expressed approval of the King, that "Greece, not merely from consciousness of her indebtedness to the Great Protecting Powers,² but from a clear perception of her vital interests as a

Much has been written about the exploits of these two warships. Mr. Winston Churchill in particular gives a picturesque account of the series of unfortunate coincidences which led to their escape. (*World Crisis*, pp. 226–236.) But there is an event which has so far escaped the attention of commentators.

Forty hours after the entry of the German warships into the Straits the British fleet appeared before the Dardanelles. Why did it not force its way through? Turkey was neutral and the defensive positions of the Straits manned by skeleton staffs. The opportunity was favourable and the pretence that the German warships were acquired by Turkey could not be accepted on the face of it as a legal transaction, still less could even its questionable legality have proved a deterrent to British action, since only a week previously the First Lord of the Admiralty, in defiance of international law, had ordered the retention of two Turkish men-of-war built in an English shipyard, and ready to sail

The Greek Admiral Countouriotis, while sailing round Lemnos, sighted the British fleet and offered to place his forces under the British Admiral's command in order to effect the forcing of the Dardanelles. The British Commander answered, "We have no orders to pursue the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*." It must be mentioned that Countouriotis acted without the knowledge and against the wishes of the Greek Government. But the fact that the offer was made and refused, when its acceptance might have had results beneficial to the *entente*, brings home the effects of indecision. A few weeks later the situation changed radically, and no British warship entered the Dardanelles until the autumn of 1918.

² By the Convention of May 7, 1832, and the Treaty of London, July 13, 1863, Great Britain, France and Russia guaranteed Greek independence.

nation, understood that her place was at the side of the Powers of the *entente*; and that whereas in the war that was being waged it was not possible for her to take a military part, since she could not reinforce Serbia, owing to the danger from Bulgaria, much less send an expeditionary force to France, nevertheless she thought it her duty to declare to the Powers of the *entente* that if Turkey went to war against them she placed all her forces, naval and military, at their disposal for the war against Turkey, always presupposing that she was to be guaranteed against the Bulgarian danger.”¹ Many of Venizelos’s opponents condemned his haste in associating Greece with the fortunes of the *entente* at an exceedingly critical period of the *entente*’s history. What would have happened, bewailed the pessimists, if the Germans were not stopped on the Marne? On the contrary, Venizelos’s action had been well advised and timely. The psychological moment was favourable. The *entente*, facing disaster, appreciated the Greek offer of support enormously. As a result, an assurance came from Great Britain to the effect that the Turkish fleet would not be allowed to leave the Dardanelles, and the Greek army was allowed to re-occupy provisionally Northern Epirus. Thus the threat which the Turkish fleet offered to Greece was averted. Had he waited for the turn of the tide before he sent this communication, it is doubtful whether Britain and France would have been equally willing to guarantee Greece against two states which were not as yet officially their enemies.

Sir Edward Grey felt it necessary to decline the immediate aid offered by Greece, for fear of throwing Turkey into the enemy camp. But in spite of that, London was becoming increasingly perturbed by Turkey’s bad faith in her professed friendship with the *entente*. A week after Venizelos’s communication, the British Government instructed Admiral Kerr to concert plans with the Greek General Staff for a “possible” occupation of Gallipoli. The Admiral, received in audience by the King, was informed that such conversations were futile, as he had no intention of making war against Turkey. The Admiral asked

¹ The exact terms of this communication have not been made public. Extract quoted is from M. J. Mavrogordato’s *Modern Greece*, pp. 99–100, which is taken from a speech by Venizelos delivered in August 1917.

leave to communicate the interview to his Government, but the King suggested that before any message was sent the Prime Minister ought to be consulted.

Venizelos refused to allow such a communication to be sent to the British Government. Only a week previously he had responded warmly to their willingness to support Greece. Such an action at that moment, while the outcome of war in France was still in the balance, would have been a diplomatic calamity. He at once proceeded to address a communication to the King. Going straight to the heart of the matter, he wrote, "As I had the honour to inform your Majesty, it is of course impossible for us to undertake an offensive war against Turkey unless we are assured of the co-operation or at least of the absolute neutrality of Bulgaria. But to declare that under no circumstances, not even if this condition were fulfilled, should we be disposed to wage war on Turkey before Turkey attacks us, is clearly opposed to the well-understood interests of the nation. Let us not deceive ourselves. Turkey has long been waging an undeclared war against us.

"If we refuse on principle and quite unconditionally to join in a war against Turkey we do not thereby escape such a war, but only postpone it. And we do not even postpone it for long. It is obvious that Turkey will want to settle her accounts with us before she demobilises. When we have before us the prospect of prosecuting the war against Turkey with the help of powerful and numerous allies, are we to throw away such an opportunity in order to find ourselves some day compelled to fight the same war without allies and without friends?" He concluded by protesting against the King's excessive fear of offending Germany, and finally offered to resign. The King refused to accept the resignation, and indeed had no difficulty in persuading Venizelos to stay. Needless to say, Venizelos had no desire to depart, but had simply used the threat of resignation as a trump card.

The Foreign Minister, M. G. Streit, a portly linguist of German origin, proved to be the guilty party in this initial clash between Sovereign and Minister. He was advising the King on questions of foreign policy without the knowledge of the Government

Driven by his political sympathies towards Germany, he went so far as to ignore the decision of the Cabinet and informed the German Emperor that under no circumstances would Greece be involved in a war against the friends and allies of Germany. Venizelos, on hearing of this inexcusable behaviour, demanded the instant resignation of his Minister. Streit resigned, but the King administered a civil rebuff to Venizelos by appointing him as his private political counsellor. A month later Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers.

While the Allies tentatively delegated Admiral Kerr to work out plans with the Greek General Staff for a possible attack on Gallipoli, they declined to treat Greece as an ally or even accept Venizelos's offer. Sir Edward Grey clung tenaciously to the formula of avoiding "further Balkan entanglements," and worked persistently to bring Bulgaria within the Allies' fold, or at any rate, to assure her neutrality. Turkey would then be isolated from her allies. Venizelos's repeated warnings to the Allied Ministers in Athens that he had reliable information as to the Bulgarian alliance with Germany were allowed to pass unheeded in White-hall. The Foreign Office viewed the Bulgars from the traditional Gladstonian angle, and mistook the lavish admiration of Tsar Ferdinand for English social life as an unerring indication of political sympathy. The vain hope of getting all the Balkan States together on the side of the *entente* still persisted among the British and French Foreign Office officials. During 1914 and the beginning of 1915 Allied diplomacy as regards the Balkans ran along some such lines as these: Greece is ruled by Venizelos. Venizelos is our friend. If the King entertains respect for the Kaiser, he can do nothing because Greece's coastline is exposed and she cannot defend herself from the sea. Therefore, cultivate the friendship of Greece and at the same time make overtures to Bulgaria, offering her concessions at the expense of Greece and Serbia in order to induce her to join the Allies.

This briefly epitomises Allied diplomacy during this disturbed and eventful period. Had London and Paris adopted a definite line of policy and tried to conduct their relations with Bulgaria in another atmosphere than that of bargaining which was telling against their friends, they would have avoided innumerable pit-

falls and saved Greece from the prospect of a cruel and vindictive division.

Another factor telling against Allied sincerity was their back-handed negotiations with Italy. Rome became the Baghdad of diplomacy. Negotiations were carried on in the typical spirit of Oriental bargaining. But Italy would not be induced to join the Allies without the guarantee of a handsome compensation on the Adriatic Littoral, the Balkan hinterland, the Dodecanese and part of Anatolia. Almost everything that Italy demanded, with the exception of the Adriatic Littoral, conflicted radically with the ultimate interests of Hellenism. Venizelos was aware of these negotiations, as well as of the resultant agreement. Yet he scrupulously refrained from either mentioning them or commenting upon them. In advocating alliance with the *entente*, he was placed by the Italian Treaty in a difficult position. He could not possibly denounce the dishonest methods of the Allies, nor attack their policies without the denunciation reverting back on him like a boomerang. Instead he swallowed the bitter pill of anger, relying on the hope that by her entry into the war, without bargaining, Greece would be in a position at the peace treaty to thwart the fulfilment of questionable diplomatic manœuvres. History justified him handsomely, but temporarily.

* * *

From the first, Venizelos's sympathies were unwaveringly on the side of the *entente*. He accepted a condition of qualified neutrality as long as Bulgaria and Turkey were neutral. But with the Turkish declaration of war, the situation was altered.

His belief in the ultimate victory of the Allies was unshakable. While the King and his advisers, General Doussmanes, Colonel Metaxas and M. Streit (all of strong German sympathies) believed in the invincibility of German arms, Venizelos, even at the darkest hour when the Teutonic current of steel was rolling, apparently irresistible, towards Paris, never doubted the result. In that respect, he had a capacity for single-mindedness and steadfast attachment to a belief which refused to consider arguments prompted by a different point of view.

During the latter part of 1914, Venizelos came to accept

unhesitatingly the position that Greece should and must join the Allies and enter the war. Essentially a democrat and a Liberal, he regarded the cause of European Liberalism as bound up with the fortunes of the Western Powers. The noble ideals about the freedom of small nations and the self-determination of peoples, trumpeted volubly from London and Paris, found a warm echo in his heart. The fact was often overlooked that with these Powers was associated the darkest tyranny of Europe—Tsarist Russia. Not even pious references to world betterment were permitted to relieve the impression of the ruthless capacity of the Central Powers for destruction. The Germans had never excelled as diplomats, but their doctrine of brutal might lowered those poor standards to contempt, and alienated from them the decisive part of humanity.

Venizelos's policy had by the end of 1914 crystallised into clear form. It was impossible for Greece to take sides against England and France, and it would have been criminal even negatively (by neutrality) to assist in the maintenance and preservation of the Ottoman Empire. For five hundred years Greece had waited for the opportunity to throw off the yoke of Islamism. Half the Greek race was still under Turkish rule, and threatened with extermination. The Young Turks—the untutored precursors of Fascism—imposed a régime more tyrannical than that of the Caliph. To shrink now from facing an inevitable war meant the loss of an opportunity which might never recur. To adopt a different attitude and enter the war on the side of Turkey would have been, to his mind, nothing but treachery. He was, at the same time, under no illusions as to the intentions of the two camps of Powers now in the grip of war. In a speech on September 21, 1915, he revealed his views as follows:—

"If on the other side I see Germany and Austria, two leading states of the civilised world, I saw for a long time and still see to-day Turkey, with whom our relations are to-day characterised as regular, but with whom, unfortunately, our interests are in irreconcilable opposition, not on account of their nature, but by reason of the unalterable policy of the rulers of Turkey. And when I see the possibility of a fourth participant (Bulgaria) being added to this triple combination, . . . I cannot but foresee

dangers from these two states, and less danger from England and France. It must be understood that the Great Powers, each one of them, are out for their own interests. Only as regards the Eastern question, in which circle our own interests lie, the two Western Powers are, to my mind, those whose interests concur with our own. We must not expect foreign countries to seek the friendship of Greece. What we can do is to seek friends and allies for ourselves in that circle where there is a greater understanding of our own interests. This policy we must pursue . . .”

From this it can be seen that Venizelos was looking at the war from the standpoint of the permanent interests of Greece. In spite of his many other sympathies with the Allies, it was principally because the Allies were likely to help Greece to achieve her aims that he was wholeheartedly for taking part in their struggle. His argument is, admittedly, not entirely devoid of Machiavelian ingenuity. If your fate is being directly or indirectly decided by two Powers greater than yourself, it is your obvious duty to decide which of them you desire to win, and assist it with all your strength, because only in that direction lies the possibility of your salvation. At least he was honest in his utterances, without the foggy humbug of western humanitarianism, or the high idealism which often clothed base mundane ambitions of loot and territory.

Venizelos's mind was set upon war, whatever it might bring. Nothing could make him alter his decision. The ideal of liberty became the uncontrollable “dæmon” which forced him on, not only towards liberation, but future conquests.

* * *

Venizelos's relations with the King had lost the faultless observance of constitutionalism. The King had violated the Constitution by his personal assurance to the Kaiser (without the knowledge and against the wishes of his Government) that under no circumstances would he fight against the allies of Germany unless directly attacked. But still there was no open conflict between the King and his Prime Minister.

In January 1915, England again, on behalf of the Allies, invited Greek assistance, not against Turkey, but for the relief of Serbia. The motive underlying this invitation was a genuine

attempt to reconstruct the Balkan Federation, which for its accomplishment required some territorial readjustments in Macedonia. If Greece was prepared to make certain small concessions to Bulgaria, the Allies promised in return important compensations on the coast of Asia Minor. It is only fitting to mention here that simultaneously, in negotiations with Rome, the Allies promised concessions in Asia Minor to Italy, and the Tsar had claimed that Russian rights over European and Asiatic Turkey should not be overlooked.

Prompted by Sir Edward Grey's offer, Venizelos instantly addressed to the King a memorandum asking him to accept the offer as a unique recognition of the claims of Hellenism. His argument was that the invitation to join the war was consistent with the moral obligations of Greece to assist Serbia, in exchange for compensations which, when realised, would make Greece great and powerful. It was necessary also to secure the co-operation of Rumania or Bulgaria or both and further territorial readjustments would probably have to be made. Venizelos concluded by striking a patriotic note, declaring that by fighting "we shall free our countrymen still held in subjection by Turkey" and appealing to "the general interests of humanity and the independence of small nations, which a Turko-German triumph would jeopardise irreparably." Never did Venizelos speak in such persuasive terms to the Chamber as he found necessary in addressing the King.

The Rumanian Government, when sounded, refused to be drawn out of their enigmatic equivocation, and suggested that they could not consider any military co-operation with Greece and Serbia, unless Bulgaria also participated. Venizelos addressed a second memorandum to the King, stating that in order to achieve a real Magna Grecia he found himself in the painful position, in attempting the reconstruction of the Balkan League, of sacrificing Kavalla and 30,000 square kilometres of territory to Bulgaria in exchange for territory in Asia Minor "of 125,000 kilometres, as large as, and no less rich than the whole kingdom of Greece, and containing eight hundred thousand Greek inhabitants." (The extent of the acquisition was purely of Venizelos's invention, as the British Foreign Minister had made

only a general and vague offer.) "I firmly believe," ran the memorandum, "that we ought to lay aside any hesitation. If we do not take part in the war, whatever the result, the Hellenism of Asia Minor will be lost to us finally. If the Powers of the *entente* are victorious, they will divide among themselves, or with Italy, both Asia Minor and the remains of Turkey. If Germany and Turkey are victorious, not only will the two hundred thousand Greeks who have already been driven from Asia Minor have to renounce all hope of returning to their homes . . . but a triumph of Germanism would mean the absorption of the whole of Asia Minor."¹

Hard on the heels of these memoranda came the news of the floating of a £25,000,000 loan for Bulgaria in Berlin. Military aid to Serbia would have exposed the Greek army to Bulgarian attack. With the avowed hostility of Bulgaria, the question of territorial readjustment was shelved, and Grey's offer was filed away as an historic document.

Venizelos's strongest motive was his anxiety lest Asia Minor should be divided among others without Greece claiming her legitimate share. War as a means of settling internal disputes is cruel and barbaric, and carries with it far more complications than those it attempts to solve. But a war as an instrument of liberation is still a tragic necessity in contemporary civilisation. Liberty can sometimes only be achieved by force, and now when the time for force had come, Venizelos could no longer weave sweet dreams of peaceful development. The Ottoman Empire was trembling on the edge of the abyss. To Greece, with the assistance of the Powers, had fallen the task of giving her the final coup-de-grâce. His mind was made up to intervene, and for the moment—an erstwhile subject and revolutionary himself—he felt that he represented the inexpressible sentiments of millions of his fellow Christians still under the harsh rule of Constantinople.

* * *

After the initial clash, the mighty armies of the civilised nations in the west settled down to the sombre monotony of trench warfare. Nobody could force the issue. The opposing cavalcades

¹ Anglo-Hellenic League Publication No. 19.

of steel and shell met in angry impact, but the equal momentum produced a stalemate. In the philosophy of professional militarists the issue was one of frontal attacks, unconcerned with human wastage, for wearing down the opponents. Civilians behind the lines, their minds free from the rigidity of professional training, began to perceive that frontal attacks were useless, that the factor of "surprise" should come into play with the object of striking, not at the strongest, but at the weakest point. In the British Cabinet, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill began to consider the advisability of an attack on Gallipoli to force the Dardanelles, isolate Turkey, and establish communication with Russia through the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

On February 19, 1915, the British fleet carried out a preliminary bombardment of Gallipoli. The stage was set for the attack, but warning had been given to Liman von Sanders and the Turkish command to turn their attention seriously to the question of fortifying the Straits.

Venizelos, realising that a Greek force would be required to assist the Allied expedition, again took up with the King the question of Greek co-operation. By a fourth memorandum (unpublished) he succeeded in overcoming the King's hesitation. Venizelos painted a glowing picture of the future if Greece would definitely declare war on the side of the Allies. Greece need not fear possible entanglements in Asia Minor, he suggested, as the distrust among the Great Powers was great enough not only to ensure the protection of her own acquisitions, but also to allow her to expand until the unity of all the Greeks was achieved. He asked for an army corps to assist the Allies.

"Such was the earnestness with which I spoke," said Venizelos later, "so strong were the arguments that were set forth in the memorandum, that the King, who quite evidently (as is clearly proved by subsequent events) had from the very beginning promised the Emperor of Germany that he would never be found in the *entente* camp unless one of the Balkan States attacked him—the King said to me with great emotion (I remember the very words)—'Very well then, in God's name.' That is to say he consented."¹

¹ Gibbons, H. A.: *Venizelos*, p. 221.

On coming into the ante-room after the conclusion of the interview, Venizelos found the Chief of Staff, Colonel Metaxas, waiting for him to hand him his resignation on the grounds that he disapproved of the Government's policy. The Greek High Officers have been proverbially disloyal and undisciplinary. They have been schooled in opportunism. We have seen how Admiral Countouriotis on his own initiative offered the services of the Greek fleet to the British Admiral in order to chase the German warships in the Dardanelles. Now political considerations had forced the Chief of Staff to resign, and he took the unprecedented step of informing the Press of his resignation before the Government had any knowledge of it.

Venizelos, taken aback by an action which augured an interference by the army in politics, insisted at once on a Crown Council under the presidency of the King in order to discuss the general situation, and the resignation of the Chief of Staff. All the party leaders supported Venizelos in the Crown Council and agreed that it would be disastrous for the King and Cabinet to allow their policy to be influenced by the action of Colonel Metaxas. At a second Crown Council on March 5, Metaxas was called to answer for his actions, which he sought to justify by fortifying himself behind questions of strategy and the demands of the situation. Venizelos successfully combated the military arguments, knowing through his secret service that the Gallipoli Peninsula was weakly held, and that Greek participation would expedite the Allied preparations for a successful break through. He modified his original proposal and asked for a division instead of an army corps. It is idle to assume that by such assistance he expected to determine the course of the attack. But agreement with his suggestion would have helped to break down the opposition of the pro-German elements and eventually permit Greek co-operation with all available naval and military forces. So strong was the logic of his arguments and so vividly did he propound them—on the one hand the enlargement of the Greek State as a result of victory; on the other hand, the results of non-intervention which might mean that either Greece would be barred for all time from Asia Minor by the occupation of the Allies, or in the event of the victory of the Central Powers, Greece

neutral and friendless would have to face a strong Bulgaria and an aggressive Turkey—that the party leaders, most of them confirmed anti-Venizelists like Rhalles and Dragoumes, supported Venizelos and even Theotokes, who never wavered in his personal preference for neutrality, urged the King to go on, and declare for intervention.

The King, who only a few days previously had given his consent, faced now with the unanimous approval of all the political parties, refused. Venizelos resigned the following day and four days later a Government was formed by M. D. Gounares, deputy for Patras, a learned but unpractical individual, whose political attachments were with Germany.

* * *

Whether by intention or not, the King by his action divided Greece and helped to promote a Royalist Party. Constitutionally he acted within his prerogatives in dismissing Venizelos. But being, as he was, aware of the concurrence of all other political parties to Venizelos's policy, it was obvious that no alternative Government could be found save one devoid of popular support and deriving its authority from the King himself. The die was cast and the decision taken. Constantine adopted a course whose logical goal would be monarchical absolutism.

At the beginning of the war, the King was honestly neutral, especially as neutrality conformed to his pledge to the German Kaiser. He was convinced not only of German invincibility, but of the righteousness of Germany's cause. He was also benevolently disposed towards the Allies, but purely on grounds of Greek historical sentiment—as the guarantors of Greek independence. Whatever his personal views, he had the supreme weakness of vacillating, of changing his mind, declaring for intervention the one day and demanding the observance of neutrality the next, and lacked the honesty and courage to voice his opinions. Had he been wholeheartedly for neutrality because the interests of his country so demanded, he ought to have declared so emphatically, and assume full responsibility for his action. By adopting circumspection, evasion and duplicity as the crafts of Kingship, he could only act with secrecy and cowardice.

Many of Venizelos's critics accuse him of being responsible for

the splitting of Greece into two irrevocably hostile parties. He has certainly made other mistakes and committed many follies, but this was not of his own creation. We have it on the authority of M. Caclamanos—who was the secretary of the two Crown Councils—that even after his resignation, Venizelos, otherwise very easily piqued and quickly forced to vindictiveness, was not bitter and spoke of the King in terms which did not allow one to infer hostility and antagonism.¹ It was entirely and exclusively the King and his entourage who had been responsible for the split.

Whatever the underlying motives, the action of March 6 had tremendous consequences. National unity, always brittle, was broken. The contesting Powers found, in two equally popular persons, champions of their cause, and expertly injected the corroding acids of their propaganda into the unsuspecting Greek public. Athens gradually became the battleground of German and Allied espionage and propaganda. The authority of the State vanished to the point of permitting foreigners to perpetrate crimes with impunity in Greek territories.

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After his resignation, Venizelos went for a short vacation to Spetsai and then to Egypt. During his brief absence, the situation was thoroughly transformed. The King and the Cabinet instituted a régime which had unmistakable dictatorial tendencies. Once ordinary constitutional practice had been challenged no one could say how far the King intended to go. Liberal meetings were forbidden and the Liberal Press felt the heavy hand of semi-official censorship. On his return, the police refused to allow Venizelos to disembark at Piræus, where a demonstration of his followers was waiting to greet him, and he had to land at Phaleron. This brought home to him the realisation that Greece was falling again in the hands of the Court and of the feudal party bosses who had been swept away by the revolution of 1909.

Meanwhile the Allied expedition to Gallipoli gathered momentum on its fatal course. By now the secret was out. The preliminary bombardment—weeks before the attacking force was ready—and the mine sweeping, had given ample warning to the Turkish Command to fortify the Straits. And, even so, the actual

¹ D. Caclamanos, *Eleutherios Venizelos*.

attack was undertaken with numerically inadequate forces and on a limited objective. The scheme did not include the vulnerable parts of Thrace and Asia Minor, where a break through by land could be easily effected against the Turkish armies, which were ill-equipped in heavy artillery. But armies were needed for such a project, and the Allied Command wanted every available soldier for the ineffectual blood-bath in the west.

The military mistakes of the Allies at this time did not fall short of their diplomatic shortcomings. At the moment when the Germans were advancing across Poland and Russia's position was nothing short of desperate, the Tsarist Government chose to revive their old policy of preventing the extension of Greece. On March 3, M. Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, declared to the British Ambassador in Petrograd that "the Russian Government could not consent to Greece participating in operations in the Dardanelles, as it would be sure to lead to complications."¹ The Russian Minister in Athens brought pressure to bear in order to discourage the Greeks. This undoubtedly forced the hand of the King in maintaining his policy of neutrality. The Royalists made great use of the Russian antagonism in their attacks on Venizelos later on. Greek participation in Gallipoli, they argued, would have led to fruitless slaughter. And for what? For the Tsar to have Constantinople? But this was not entirely accurate. True, Russia had strong misgivings against seeing the Greek armies on the shores of the Sea of Marmora. But Sazonov's warning had not the significance which was attributed to it, and a few days later the French Foreign Minister, M. Delcassé, informed the Greek Government that there was no longer any objection by Russia to Greek co-operation in the Dardanelles.

The Gallipoli attack ended in fiasco. Volumes have been written on the subject, which constitutes the darkest page of English war history. It is outside our subject to dwell on the

¹ Mr. Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis*, Vol. II, p. 202. Here Mr. Winston Churchill unqualifiedly accepts the hint of the Russian Foreign Minister as a definite statement of policy. M. Venizelos when he read this sought to correct the impression which was gaining ground and wrote a lengthy letter to Mr. Winston Churchill relating the true aspect of the situation. As far as we know, the letter was not used in any way by the recipient.

pros and cons of this controversy. Failures are always controversial. Here, more than anywhere else, the factors of "time" and "speed" were paramount. The attack was postponed too long, and when it eventually took place the situation had changed. The Turks had time to bring up troops, entrench themselves in strong positions, and fortify the Peninsula. At the head of the section which bore the brunt of the fighting was the grim desperado of the Turkish army—Mustapha Kemal—the future dictator of Turkey. Venizelos's comment on this is worth mentioning as it demonstrates that in war time "speed" and "surprise" are the unquestionable arbiters. "If we had made use," he said, "of one army corps, or even of one single division, the seizure of Gallipoli would have been a military exploit of no great difficulty. Five days after the decree of mobilisation, the army corps I asked for would have been mobilised and in another nine days, with the abundance of material which we and our Allies had at our disposal, we should have found ourselves with our army corps, or even with our one division, in occupation of the Gallipoli Peninsula, which was unguarded, ungarrisoned and unfortified." Dispositions of the Turkish armies during that time, made public after the war, amply confirm Venizelos's view.

With the advent of the Gounares Government, Greek policy towards the *entente* became evasive and undefined. Allied diplomacy on the other hand had also changed its tune. Greek participation was wanted, and indeed needed, but it had to be unconditional. The Quai d'Orsay wanted Greece to enter the war as a subordinate, and was opposed to negotiating with her as an equal, in an endeavour to strike a bargain.

The Foreign Minister, M. Zographos, attempted to come to terms with the *entente*, but his sincere proposals were always defeated by the stipulations of the General Staff. France would not agree to any policy which would guarantee the territorial integrity of Greece for fear of giving offence to Bulgaria, which was believed by the Quai d'Orsay to be definitely ranged with the Triple Entente. Greece was consequently distrustful, and when the Allies specifically offered the town of Smyrna and an important hinterland, there was no reply from Athens. The French Government indignantly accused Greece of bad faith.

M. Poincaré (then President) subsequently stated that the French attitude was determined at the time by the knowledge that Gounares had taken office for the specific purpose of maintaining neutrality, and was therefore not trusted by France.

Bad faith. There was bad faith, but it was not confined to Greece alone. While the Allies were making overtures to Greece, questionable negotiations were also going on between the Allies and Italy. Italy was a bigger catch. "The 'secret' Treaty of London of April 26, 1915," writes William Miller in *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors, 1801–1927*, "which was the reward for Italian support, severely handicapped Allied diplomacy at Nish and Athens. When it leaked out that the treaty assigned to Italy Northern Dalmatia, despite its overwhelmingly Slav population, it became impossible to induce the Serbian Government to make such territorial concessions to Bulgaria in Macedonia as would purchase Bulgarian support. Greece and Italy regarded one another as rivals in the Levant; and Article 8, which assigned to Italy 'entire sovereignty over the Dodecanese,' was as little counterbalanced by her conditional promise not to oppose the assignment of 'Southern Albania' to Greece, as was the loss of Northern Dalmatia by the similar pledge not to oppose the division of Northern Albania between Serbia and Montenegro. This policy of obtaining Dalmatia, Istria, and the Trentino by the sacrifice of Albania, where she was also to 'receive full sovereignty over Valona, Saseno' and the territory from the Vjousa to Cheimarra, alienated Albanian sympathies from Italy without winning those of Serbia and Greece; and Baron Sonnino's tactless disclosure of the fact that Austrian intervention alone had prevented Italy from occupying Chios and Lesbos in 1912, further diminished Italian and Allied popularity at Athens, when Baron von Schenk, ably seconded by the diplomatic errors of the Allies, was successfully 'converting' the newspapers to the German side. Indeed, Italy's interest was that M. Venizelos should not come into power, or Greece into the war; and her Minister at Athens, Count Bosdari, did not, therefore, see eye to eye with his colleagues."

The Gounares Government started playing the same game. In numerous communications they demonstrated their intention of maintaining neutrality, while affecting sympathy with the *entente*

and trying to give the impression that they were sincerely striving to arrive at an agreement as to the form and the extent of Greek intervention. Honesty even in diplomacy is occasionally helpful, but here honesty was entirely lacking. So clumsy and shifty were the proposals of Gounares that at last M. Delcassé, equally handicapped by the same attributes, cut short the negotiations. The stock of the Greek Government fell considerably in London and Paris. At this period the ex-enemy of Venizelos, Prince George, living in Paris, sent a personal telegram to King Constantine urging him to join the Allies as the existence of the nation was in danger.¹ He realised that French hostility towards Constantine and Gounares was real and deep-rooted.

Such were the actions of Allied diplomacy. They helped to strengthen the position of the King and his entourage, who even found comfort in the thought that the blatant brutality of Germany was preferable to the duplicity of the West. In Venizelos they had an opponent, who, while resentful of the unfriendly actions of the Allies, and embittered by them, adhered to his opinion that only on the side of the Allies could Greece find salvation. The failure of the Dardanelles expedition was considered a good opportunity for the Government to stage a general election. The King gave Gounares the secret memoranda of Venizelos for him to use during the elections in order to discredit his rival, but Venizelos, informed in advance, published his memoranda at once, with a long commentary, and stole the thunder from his opponents.

¹ Paris, April 27. Son Altesse le Prince Georges vous prie remettre à S. M. le Roi telegramme suivant: "Situation est excessivement grave et tout l'avenir national depend de Votre décision. Après toutes les démarches faites par Gouvernement précédent et par Gouvernement actuel auprès Triple Entente et surtout après dernière proposition flotte et garde armée contre peril Bulgare acceptée par Puissances, nous nous sommes sérieusement compromis, ce qui veut dire qu'en refusant maintenant notre coopération ou en la proposant avec conditions que nous savons ne pouvoir être acceptées nous nous exposons au peril certain voir Angleterre et France hostiles même à l'avenir, ce qui équivaudrait à la ruine Grèce. Tous intérêts dans la Méditerranée et en Asie Mineure seront sacrifiés aux intérêts Italie et autres et rien ne pourra nous sauver. Je Vous implore à genoux de toute mon âme et de toutes mes forces, dan Votre intérêt personnel, dans l'intérêt de la Nation, dont destinée ne dépend que de Vous même en ce moment, marchez au nom Dieu. Ne pas le faire est suicide certain pour Vous et pour-la Nation.—Georges." (Sig. Romanos.)

The elections were held under a régime which was little short of terrorist. Venizelos himself was prevented from taking part in the campaign, and obstacles were put in the way of his followers. The Royalists had a free field. But their repressive actions produced results different from those anticipated. Even fervent Royalists had to admit that Admiral Goudas, given a free hand by the Government to "arrange" the elections in Macedonia, went too far. He made a clean sweep of the Liberal candidates and prevented them from explaining or defending their policy either through the Press or on the platform.

The elections were held on June 13, 1915. The Liberal Party won 184 seats out of the 310 in the Chamber, a clear majority of fifty-eight over the other parties combined. Venizelos's policy was unmistakably vindicated by the electorate.

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Two and a half months elapsed after the elections before Venizelos was called to form a ministry. The King was seriously ill during this period and this was given as an excuse for the delay. No attempt was made to set up a Regency, such as was provided for by the Constitution in the event of the King being incapable of performing his office. Gounares used this merely as a cover to prolong his tenure of office and keep Greece neutral for a little longer.

When invited to form a Cabinet (August 23) Venizelos accepted with the understanding that the policy of the Government would be "never to allow Bulgaria to crush Serbia." The King consented, and Venizelos hastened to the Chamber to pass the news to the deputies and tell them that in future this should be the firm policy of his Government. It is remarkable that the King consented to this provision, knowing that four weeks previously Premier Gounares had informed Germany that Greece would remain neutral in the event of Bulgaria attacking Serbia.

Venizelos made this conditional to his acceptance of office, because he was convinced that Bulgaria had definitely joined the enemy camp. Confronting him and the Allies was the Turko-Bulgarian railway agreement of July, which was merely an indication of the path Bulgaria intended to follow. Yet the

Allies still treasured the belief that this agreement was devoid of any political significance! But neither Greece nor Serbia entertained any illusions on the matter. Such was the outcry in the Greek Press at this agreement that Premier Gounares had had to declare publicly on August 2 that "a Bulgarian attack on Serbia cannot leave us indifferent" in spite of his assurance to the contrary three days earlier to the German Emperor.

Back in power, Venizelos had to face the bitter opposition of jealous party leaders and aristocratic idlers; of patriots in the pay of Germany; in short, all of the forces of "ineffectualism" bottled up since 1910. But, above all, he had to face a gradual, but far from general, disillusionment among the people as to the final verdict of the conflict. Venizelos had made them believe that the victory of the *entente* was a certainty and that Greece ought not to be left out of the concert of the victors. Great changes had been witnessed since those February days when a break through at Gallipoli was interpreted as the beginning of the end. They had seen that expedition under the powerful guns of mighty ships reduced to shambles. They had witnessed the sweep of the Germans through Poland, the cruel holocaust of the Russian armies and they had seen the Allies licking their wounds in Flanders.

Baron von Schenk, the German Minister, was telling them so every day through the columns of the Royalist Press. German money had bought theatres and music halls and was spreading propaganda lavishly for the purpose of vilifying Venizelos. All the elements of reaction grouped themselves round the German Minister.

For a moment Venizelos appeared to have resigned himself to neutrality, but it was a pretence. He was convinced that Bulgaria was preparing, and thought it better to wait. He informed Serbia and Germany and the Protecting Powers that his policy was to protect Serbia from a Bulgarian attack, asking Germany at the same time to restrain Bulgaria from such an action. He realised that the country was now against intervention, and did not conceal his abandonment of the Dardanelles policy. On the contrary, he made it clear that a wonderful opportunity had passed. But the prospect of a Bulgarian attack upon Serbia was

now a matter of vital interest to Greece and her treaty obligations. A "greater" Bulgaria would destroy the balance of power in the Balkans. It was no longer a question of acquiring territories in Asia Minor and forestalling Italian claims, nor of the liberation of Greeks, but one of life and death for the Greek State.

However hard Venizelos strove to build up enthusiasm for the cause of intervention, *entente* diplomacy by some unexpected action was ruining his efforts and strengthening the pro-German party. Two weeks before Venizelos returned to power, Great Britain, France and Russia notified the Greek Government that they had promised to Bulgaria Kavalla and its hinterland, enlarged in proportion to Greek territorial expansion in Asia Minor. Such an action, which assumed the right to dispose of Greek territory without the consent of Greece, was calculated to enrage a friendly people. By so doing the *entente* hoped to win both Greece and Bulgaria, and instead lost both. Up to the middle of September, London and Paris refused to believe that Bulgaria would join the Central Powers, and made no preparations for this contingency, and did not even attempt to give effective aid to Serbia, although full information was to hand about the Austro-German concentration on the Serbian frontier.

While the *entente* wavered and wrangled over their Balkan policy, Serbia, under the menace of the massed enemy troops, asked to be given the right to attack Bulgaria while the latter was still unmobilised. The argument of the Serbian General Staff ran as follows: "Bulgaria is going to attack us. Why should we not attack first and crush her while she is still unprepared?" But the Allies objected. Russia in particular urged that such action would relieve Greece of her treaty obligations, as Serbia was the attacker. "Wait," suggested the Tsarist Government, "for Bulgaria to attack first so that you will have the right to invoke the Greco-Serbian treaty."

On September 23, 1915, Bulgaria mobilised. Venizelos saw the King the same afternoon and after prolonged argument succeeded in persuading him to sign a decree for Greek mobilisation. To convince him was not easy. While the result was still hanging in the balance, Venizelos spoke to the King in a manner of unmistakable gravity. "Your Majesty, having failed to persuade

you, I am very sorry but it is my duty, as representing at this moment the sovereignty of the people, to tell you that this time you have no right to differ from me. By the elections of June 13, the people have approved my policy and given me their confidence; and the electorate knew that the foundation of my policy was that we should not allow Bulgaria to crush Serbia and expand so as to crush us to-morrow. If you are determined to violate the Constitution, you must say so clearly and assume full responsibility." The King's answer was staggering. "As long as it is a question of internal affairs, I am bound to obey to popular verdict; but when it is a question of foreign affairs, great international questions, I think that so long as I believe a thing is right or wrong, I must insist that it shall or shall not be done because I feel responsible before God!" Venizelos curtly replied, "After calling your Majesty's attention to the Constitution, I feel I must offer my resignation."

The trump card worked. The King could not face the responsibility of dismissing his Premier, on the grounds of refusing to safeguard his country against the possibility of external danger from Bulgaria. He persuaded Venizelos to stay in office and signed the decree of mobilisation, but "only as a precautionary measure."

The King's main argument against mobilisation was that Serbia, engaged in holding back the Austrians on the line of the Danube, could not put into the field the 150,000 men stipulated by the Greco-Serbian Alliance. "What about the Allies?" suggested Venizelos, "will they not be prepared to place that number of men at our disposal?" and before the interview ended, Venizelos was empowered to make the necessary enquiries of the *entente*.¹

¹ On this point a controversy has been raging. The King stated that he was not consulted, and that he knew nothing, and that he was informed about it an hour after Venizelos's *démarche* to the Allied Ministers in Athens by a letter from Venizelos saying that the enquiry was already made. Venizelos, on the other hand, maintained that the King agreed to his suggestions to inquire whether Britain, France and Russia were prepared to place 150,000 men on the field which Serbia could not do. No official documents have been issued on this matter. The two men were alone and their stories, so much at variance, are the only indication of what happened. What exactly was said and agreed upon will perhaps never be accurately known.

An hour after he left the Palace, Venizelos summoned the Ministers of the *entente*, and communicated his views to them. Two days later came the answer that the Powers were ready to make good Serbia's quota against Bulgaria. Scarcely a week had elapsed when a note from the French Minister to the Greek Government announced that "the first French troops have arrived in Salonika in order to assist Serbia, France and England assuming that Greece will not oppose measures taken in the interests of Serbia who is her ally." The King was against disembarkation; "as long as Bulgaria does not attack Serbia," he declared, "the presence of French troops on Greek soil would constitute a violation of Greek neutrality." Venizelos was instructed to protest. He told the French and British Ministers that "we shall have to protest, but at the same time we shall afford you all facilities for disembarkation and quartering."

The expedition of Salonika was received throughout Greece with resentment. The Royalist Press represented it as a rude attempt to force Greece into war. The people began to weary of Venizelos's indecision, one way or another, and the presence of foreign troops was not comforting to them. Had the opposition waited for a few more months before driving Venizelos out of office, he would have been the most unpopular man in Greece. The question of entering the war had lost the alluring attraction of liberation, for it was no longer to be a war against Turkey, but a war for the support of Serbia against the Central Powers. Impatient and sure of the support of the King and the General Staff, the opposition challenged Venizelos in the Chamber as to what would be his attitude if in assisting Serbia he had to face Germany. Venizelos declared from the Tribune that the policy of neutrality was detrimental to Greece, and that he intended to respect the Greco-Serbian Treaty and protect the Serbian flank. "Greece has no immediate quarrel with Germany and Austria: but if in the course of events in the Balkan Peninsula, she should find herself faced by other Powers, she will act as her honour demands." At the conclusion of the debate the Government received the confidence of the Chamber by a majority of forty-nine.

The following morning the King summoned Venizelos to the palace. He rebuked his Premier for his speech of the previous night. Russia meanwhile had declared war on Bulgaria, and so there was no longer for Greece a case of *casus fœderis*, and the presence of the Anglo-French expedition in Salonika under the command of General Sarrail and Sir Bryan Mahon was, according to international law, a hostile act. The argument dragged on inconclusively. Venizelos suggested that the only solution of the problem of neutrality was the abandonment of neutrality. The King reminded Venizelos that in the view of the General Staff this was sheer lunacy. "And what about your friends, M. Venizelos? Where are their 150,000 men? They landed 13,000 as a trick to involve Greece without risking anything or assuming any obligations." After this interview, Venizelos was forced to resign and M. Zaimes was asked to form a Government.

With Bulgaria on the side of Germany, the *entente* sought by inducement to enlist Greek participation. Russia waived her former opposition and it was agreed that a simultaneous offer should be made to Greece consisting of Thrace, the coastal regions of Asia Minor, and Cyprus. The offer was to be made jointly and in its totality, but collective action was destroyed by the one-sided offer of Cyprus by Britain alone on October 11 (the offer was withdrawn on October 22) with the result that the "bargain" did not take place. In any case, the Government was pledged to follow neutrality (which now became a "benevolent neutrality" towards the *entente*) and would not have accepted the offer. Zaimes, in a lengthy communication to Serbia on October 12, contested the obligation of Greece devolving from the treaty and denied that there was a case of *casus fœderis*. Pressed hard in the Chamber he naïvely declared, "I did not come to honour the treaty with Serbia, but to break it."

The Tsarist Government, enraged by Greek dishonesty in promising months in advance to help Serbia and deserting her in her hour of need, attempted to punish Greece by arranging that Salonika and its hinterland should be given to Serbia. Only the unwillingness of Britain and France to incur the hostility of the entire Greek people, and even to alienate Venizelos, saved Greece from dismemberment.

Venizelos, though out of office, became aware of the Russian move. He knew that if Greece failed until the end to come out on the side of the Allies, nobody could guarantee her territorial integrity. Neutrality meant disaster whichever side won. Intervention was the lesser of two evils. Passive submission was more intolerable than defeat.

* * *

The year which followed was one of a series of humiliations for Greece—of the *entente's* interference in the internal affairs of a neutral country becoming more flagrant—of German propaganda casting a cloud over Athens—of German and Allied spies competing against each other in sensational discoveries—of murdering squads trampling down their enemies—of agitators touring the countryside and inciting the peasantry against their opponents. Every semblance of freedom was taken away. Anyone in Athens during 1916 might have legitimately wondered who was ruling Greece. The German Embassy owned three-quarters of the daily papers. The French Embassy, through its agents, was organising demonstrations against the Government, or attacks upon the Allied citizens in order to force the Allies into action. Greek ships were stopped and searched on the high seas. Cargoes were confiscated. There was the fictitious scare of German submarine bases round the Greek coast, deliberately engineered by the French Embassy. Marines were landed in Nauplia from Allied warships and destroyed a Government dépôt which contained nothing more warlike than liquid used for the destruction of locusts. Greek ships were unlawfully detained in the Mediterranean harbours and Greek trade suffered enormously. No visa was granted by the Allied Embassies to any person without the sanction of the Liberal Party organisation.

Such actions were indefensible. Even ardent Venizelists complained against the high-handed methods of the *entente*. The King might have been wrong, surrounded as he was by a phalanx of sycophants, incompetents and Court bootlickers. But why not take the more honourable measure of banishing him, or give the military assistance required to Venizelos in order to turn the scales? Of all the mistakes of the King, his failure to take any

action, however nominal, against the violators of Greek territory stands out supreme!

By these constant pin-pricks the *entente* caused a revulsion of popular feeling. Those who were whole-heartedly for neutrality a few months previously now transferred their sympathies to Germany.

Ministry followed upon Ministry, dependent on a Chamber in which the Liberals had the majority. Their term of office was uncertain and short lived, as they administered with increasing difficulty the personal policy of the King. M. Zaimes was followed by M Skouloudes, a wealthy old man who declared that his policy was one of "very benevolent neutrality" towards the *entente*. Elections for a new Chamber were held in December 1915, in an attempt to whittle down the Liberal majority, from which the Liberals abstained and had the satisfaction of seeing their opponents receive only 230,000 votes out of the more than 700,000 recorded in the previous June. In a proclamation to the nation, Venizelos explained his reasons for abstaining from the elections. "Not only is the Government, as a result of mobilisation, keeping half the electors with the colours, but it has resolved, and its friends make no mystery about it, to give its partisans leave of absence before the elections in order to enable them to vote. Those of the mobilised men who are not the friends of the Government will be retained with their regiments under military discipline. It is the duty of the Liberal Party to refuse to take part in this political farce in order to avoid giving an appearance of legality to what should be denounced . . . as the violation alike of constitutional law and of morality "

Unfortunately, Venizelos did not have the courage to act at once. He still hoped that the King might change his policy. While adversity had unified his ranks, and his followers were closer to him than ever before, he knew that the nation as a whole was not behind him. Public opinion was confused. The issues were befogged in a cloud of controversial propaganda and falsehood. Many of his political henchmen urged him to revolt. They reminded him of his struggles against the absolutism of Prince George twelve years previously. Here was a parallel case. *Absolutism reared its head in Greece once more*. It had to be

crushed, but how? Revolution meant civil war and the authority of the King was still considerable! Revolution with the assistance of the Allies would have been, in the circumstances, treachery in the eyes of the people. On either side loomed disaster. The Cretan rebel lay low for months between two gaping abysses. Whatever was to be done now must be drastic and radical. Any action he was likely to take could not fail to raise the cry of "treachery!" He knew the vindictiveness of his countrymen, who neither forgive nor forget. For a moment he remained silent, balanced on the sharp edge of indecision.

* * *

In June 1916, the Skouloudes Government surrendered Fort Roùpel to the Bulgarian armies. General Sarrail countered with the declaration of martial law in Salonika; M. Skouloudes resigned as a protest; and Zaimes assumed the Premiership once more. Northern Greece, in fact lopped off from the Greek kingdom, became the battleground of contesting Powers. In July and August the Bulgarians advanced and occupied practically the whole of Eastern Macedonia. The Port of Kavalla was occupied and the Greek garrison of 8,000 men was instructed to surrender. They were deported and interned in Germany as prisoners of war. Greek territory and Greek citizens were sacrificed in order that the fiction of neutrality could be slightly more prolonged.

A cry of anger went up from the people. Down with the "Danes" who are selling us to Germany "Where, at least, are your thirty pieces of silver?" shouted Venizelos in the Assembly. "The army has been mobilised for nine months and you have forbidden it either to take the offensive or to ensure our territorial integrity." The King took steps to make his despotism more effective. He organised the demobilised men into "Leagues of Reservists" pledged to carry out his policy, and defend the King against Venizelos and the Liberals.

On August 27, at a monster mass meeting of his supporters, Venizelos made a final appeal to the Government and the King to associate Greece with the Allies before it was too late, promising to support any Government which would declare for intervention.

As an answer, the League of Reservists started to intimidate the Venizelists. Venizelos's outstretched hand of friendship was refused, and his supporters instantly felt the oppression of authority. The Government's rash action destroyed any prospect of national reconciliation. The die was cast and the decision was now left to the dictates of force.

CHAPTER IX

VENIZELOS'S THIRD REVOLUTION

"THE national unity has been destroyed by thrusting the Royal prestige into politics" were Venizelos's last words when he made his final appeal to the King to revise his policy. Rumania entered the war towards the end of August. Constantine, although he showed signs that he intended to join the *entente* and gave a tentative promise to that effect, made no further steps. His promise was equal to refusal. National forbearance was at breaking point. Many units of the army were restless, while the fleet was in a state of rebellion. On September 1, 1916, two of the most prominent supporters of Venizelos, P. Argyropoulos and Colonel Zymbrakakes, revolted against the Government, and established a Committee of National Defence in Salonika with the object of reinforcing the Allies and helping to drive the Bulgarians and Germans out of Greece.

Venizelos still waited, apparently undecided. His life was in danger at the hands of the fanatical Royalist supporters, whose feelings were outraged by the *entente*'s ultimatum of September 2, supported by the presence of the fleet in Piræus for the control of ports and telegraphs and the expulsion of enemy agents under the protection of the Court. Venizelos was considered to be at the bottom of this. The issue—submission or revolt—was gradually being forced upon him, and as it was temperamentally impossible for him to yield to force, he could only adopt the second alternative. Before him lay the prospect of revolution.

He waited for almost a month before he acted. The step he was about to take was irrevocable. A small weak state, facing tremendous undertakings, was to have the additional handicap of being divided against itself. He was no longer young. At the age of fifty-three he felt himself unequal to the gigantic task of leading a revolution, the failure of which meant either exile or death. Thus undecided he sought the advice of his friend Admiral Countouriotis who, as a member of the 1st two Cabinets,

confirmed Venizelos's darkest fears about the pro-German leanings of the King, and about the King's determination to carry through his policy regardless of the interests of the country. The Admiral urged Venizelos to take up arms and offered to support him.

* * *

On the night of September 25, a bespectacled bearded man came out of a house in the Road of Patisia. He had his hat almost down to his ears and the collar of his coat was turned up. He stood for a moment, gazed furtively round, and then with the determined step of a young man sped towards the centre of the city. He took pains to keep himself in the dark and made several detours before he arrived at the appointed place near the Stadium Road. There a car was waiting and, as soon as he stepped in, it started at high speed towards the coast, to a waiting ship. The car flew the French flag and nobody guessed whom it carried.

The following day Greece and the world heard that Venizelos, joined in Crete by Admiral Countouriotis and General Dangles, had proclaimed a revolutionary movement to force the King and the Government to declare for intervention. The "Triumvirate" so far were not sure of the ground.¹ They took care to announce that their movement was not anti-dynastic. The people were not yet prepared for such a step, and Italy, Russia and England were against the overthrow of the King for fear that it might strengthen Republican sentiment. Although Venizelos had made up his mind that there was only one solution—the abdication of Constantine—for the moment he adopted different tactics in order to avoid giving offence to Great Britain.

After the weak resistance of the Royalists was overcome, the Revolutionaries became masters of Crete. They set out on a tour to arouse the islands. Samos, Mytilene and Chios declared for the Revolutionaries, and soon other islands followed suit. In ten days the "Triumvirate" arrived at Salonika, where they absorbed

¹ A complete account of this is given by J. C. Lawson in his *Tales of Aegean Intrigue*, which reveals the preparatory work done by the agents of the entente in ensuring Venizelos's success.

the "Committee of National Defence" and organised a provisional Government.

Greece had two Governments, one in Athens and one in Salonika. New Greece was with Venizelos, while the old one was with the King.

Once in Salonika the agonising, gnawing doubts of the last twelve months disappeared. Venizelos's position in the eyes of the *entente* was still precarious. What if Constantine, in one of his changing moods, should decide to intervene? Venizelos's movement would go to pieces and he would probably be driven into exile. The Italians were definitely hostile to his Government and so were the Russians.

He knew that everything depended on his success in making the required contribution to the armies in Macedonia, and he threw himself with remarkable zeal into the work of creating a working administration and building up an army. During the winter in Salonika Venizelos produced an army of 60,000 men, well officered, trained and fully equipped. He had nothing to start with, save the moral support of General Sarrail, an arrogant, narrow-minded militarist, given to wild illusions and still wilder fears. He received very little financial support and no military equipment from the Powers he had risked everything to aid. He had to battle against the progressive disillusionment of his supporters in the military strength of their Allies, after the collapse of the Rumanian army, and the bloody hecatomb of the Somme. But he staked everything on the prospect of a victory by the forces with which Greece was associated, and there was no turning back. By now he was convinced that the war would not be decided at the fronts. It had become a war of attrition, of strain, of financial and man-power exhaustion. The Powers with the unlimited resources would, in the long run, be victorious.

Many Greeks outside the radius of his authority answered his call and the army of "National Defence" gradually became an effective force. He succeeded in building up an administration more efficient than the one overthrown. It was this achievement which eventually overcame the natural restraint and caution of the British Government. His authority was recognised over Northern Greece, Crete and the Aegean Islands, and the *entente*

opened full diplomatic relations with his Government. It was only when he had proved to be the undisputed master of the regions he controlled, and had succeeded in building up an effective armed force, that the Allies took it on themselves to expel Constantine and place Venizelos in Athens as ruler.

In Athens, things were heading towards anarchy. From the rupture between Venizelos and Constantine until the abdication of the latter, Greece passed through eight months of tragedy and humiliation. The Royalists came into the open as opponents of the *entente*. Venizelos, the "arch-enemy," was wildly attacked and calumniated in the Press. Vicious cartoons of him appeared in the Press as the "bloodstained traitor" or as "the prostitute" tying up Sarrail's boots and crying for help. All sense of decency and morals disappeared. No unsavoury story was considered unworthy of publication which could help to destroy the prestige of the Cretan. His private, personal relations, his family, his imbecile brother, were objects of cruel jests. The League of Reservists were let loose to terrorise the peaceful population in the countryside. In Athens itself, their ardour was mitigated by the activities of the Anglo-French secret police, who took on themselves the task of protecting the Venizelists from Greek persecution.

In the Premiership, M. Zaimes was followed by M. Calogeropoulos, whom the Allies declined to recognise, because they doubted his capacity to restore order. On October 10, 1916, a new Government was formed by Professor S. Lambros. A month later the French Admiral Dartige du Fournet, in command of the Allied fleet imperiously intervened and arbitrarily expelled the ministers of the enemy Powers. Meanwhile, General Sarrail occupied Monastir and at once conceived the curious idea that his rear was in danger of an attack by the Greek army. However sincere the General was in his belief, he was totally wrong. This incident reveals the spirit of distrust and fear which had characterised the relations of Greece and the *entente* since the beginning of the war. In order to safeguard his "unthreatened" rear, General Sarrail suggested that a considerable part of the

artillery of the Greek army should be surrendered to the Allies. The Admiral du Fournet implemented the general's decision, and demanded the surrender of eighteen field batteries, six mountain batteries, four thousand rifles, and one hundred and forty machine guns with ammunition. The King, in his conversations with the French deputy M. Benazet, provisionally gave his verbal consent to the surrender of the war material as an expression of good faith towards the *entente*. He also suggested that he was ready to withdraw his troops from Thessaly on condition that the evacuated territory was not occupied by Venizelist troops. If the *entente* would guarantee to restrain Venizelos, he offered to give up all the material of war owned by Greece and put his fleet at the disposal of the Allies. This offer was made tentatively as a step towards the establishment of good relations. No official confirmation was given by the Government, and the *entente* did not attempt to carry out any preliminary conversations bearing on the subject. Without much ado, and without any appearance of international decency, the Admiral du Fournet not only demanded, but arbitrarily specified, the material to be surrendered, and on December 1, landed three thousand marines to make good his demand. As no official acceptance had been given by the Government, the Admiral's action was, under the circumstances, an act of aggression. Moreover, his high-handed method in seizing the Greek navy and his blatant interference in the capital was bitterly resented. A clash between Royalist troops and the Allied marines ensued, in which several hundred marines were killed. The Admiral himself was made prisoner, released after a few hours, and forced to withdraw his men.

The French Press raised cries of "Treachery," "Murder" and demanded reprisals. The rejoinder in Athens was "Violation," "Aggression." The following day the Athenian Royalist papers published a letter purported to be written by Venizelos and urging the assassination of his opponents. The letter was a forgery, but it served its purpose.¹

¹ Venizelos indignantly repudiated its authorship. Dr. Ronald M. Burrows subjected the letter to a strict test and declared that it was a forgery. He illustrated his remarks with photographic facsimiles.

This was a signal for reprisals. For two days the capital was given over to the excesses of the troops and the Reservists, who hunted down and murdered many Venizelists and looted their houses. Wholesale slaughter thus put its bloody stain upon Greek civil strife. On December 31, 1916, Great Britain and France addressed a note to the Greek Government demanding the immediate liberation of the Venizelists and indemnification of the victims of the terror. The Greek Government complied with the note of the Allies and a commission was formed, with full powers to investigate, whose decisions were to be considered binding on the Greek Government. But as long as King Constantine remained on the throne, the commission was unable to get a hearing. It was not until the end of 1918 that the commission was able to issue its reports. All statements were checked by inquiries made on the spot by experts. The total indemnities amounted to nearly 7,000,000 drachmas. Of the claims allowed, thirty-five were for murder, 922 for imprisonment, 418 for severe ill-treatment, 503 for pillage, 66 for damages, 31 for destruction of printing presses, and 900 for expulsion or flight caused by the menace of the Reservists. All these in two days and in a city of just over 100,000 people!

There was still one further weapon to be utilised by the monarchy. Excommunication! Playing with religious bigotry and appealing to the basest and crudest of human feelings. On December 26 the Archbishop of Athens, standing for the occasion on a cairn of stones, performed the medieval rite of excommunication. Eight bishops standing round him, representing Royalist Greece, chanted: "Cursed be Eleutherios Venizelos who imprisoned priests, who plotted against the King and his country." Each participant cried, "Cursed be he," and cast a stone upon the cairn. On the following morning, the cairn of cursing was found strewn with flowers and laurel leaves.

It was reported that sixty thousand Athenians participated in the scandalous ceremony, each bringing a stone to cast and curse. In six months' time, the same people welcomed Venizelos with tears in their eyes, hoping he was bringing them food.

These fulminations of the hierarchy did not worry Venizelos much. They reflected the weakness more than the strength of

the Constantine régime. Prince George had employed the same tactics a few years previously in Crete without benefiting either himself or his régime.

The Allies, after the sanguinary conflict of December 1, declared a blockade of the Greek coast. The people—the least responsible—suffered great hardship as a result. Of all the actions of the *entente*, this is the least defensible. Any other measure might be condoned under the circumstances, but the enforcement of a deliberate policy of hunger on a whole people because of the action of the monarch was, to say the least, inhuman. It not only turned the people against the *entente*, but also against Venizelos, whom they considered responsible for all the tribulations that had befallen Greece.

Constantine was forced to demobilise his army. While the Athens Government was militarily weak, Venizelos asked the right to march his army into Royalist Greece and occupy the capital. He was quite capable of doing so. The Allies refused. He pleaded in vain that it was a question of internal affairs, which ought to be settled by the Greeks themselves. Had the Allies consented, Venizelos would have occupied the capital with his own forces and would have escaped the humiliation of having to be installed as the ruler of Greece with the help of foreign bayonets.

It was not until June 1917 that the Allies, in the person of M. Zonnart, a French senator, who had been dispatched to Greece as Commissioner of the Protecting Powers, presented a note to the Greek Government demanding the abdication of King Constantine. It was intimated that the Crown Prince was to be excluded from succession on account of his pro-German sentiments. To back up the demand, French troops were landed at Corinth. On June 12, M. Zaimes informed M. Zonnart that the King had decided to leave the country and had chosen as his successor Prince Alexander, his second son.¹ On

¹ Venizelos's intention was to proclaim a republic, but England and Italy were both opposed to this. Attempts were made to secure a King outside the Greek royal family. Venizelos, writing in the *Eleftheron Vema* of April 21, 1931, related that the suggestion of an English prince for the Greek throne was vetoed by England, and the proposition for the second son of the King of the Belgians was not favourably considered. So the twenty-four-year-old Prince Alexander succeeded the throne.

the same evening, Constantine left for Switzerland, accompanied by his political advisers and some officers of the General Staff. Many pro-German politicians also went into exile along with the King.

Hard on the heels of the fleeing King, General Regnault occupied Athens. The two-year-old drama had come to its ignominious climax and Athens in the hands of French troops! Venizelos was invited to return to the capital. His position in Salonika was made untenable by the declaration of the new King that he would uphold the Constitution. There could not possibly be two Governments in existence, each with the same policy. He saw the risk, but could not fully appreciate the anger that would eventually follow the trail of his triumphant entry behind the Allied forces. "After all," he said to the French general in command, "people will always say that I returned to Athens with your support."

On June 26 Venizelos made his entry into Athens amidst scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm from which even his erstwhile opponents to his régime did not dare abstain. After the resignation of M. Zaimes, he formed a Cabinet (on the 27th) with himself as Minister of War and M. Politis—the eminent jurist—as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The same day the Government took the oath of allegiance and King Alexander signed a decree convoking the Venizelist Chamber of 1915. Two days later Greece entered the war.

With his return, Venizelos reunited the Greek Government, but he found the people divided, the nation split from top to bottom. Foreign propaganda, assisted by willing Greek servants, had left its imprint in the form of a divided allegiance. Sufferings and privation could not express themselves save in silent implacable hate. He returned not as saviour, but as conqueror. He could not restrain his followers from seeking and meting out their own private vengeance. In a land of hard brutal passions, revenge was the highest of human indulgences. Venizelos did not condone, but neither did he condemn the excesses of his followers. He let events take their course, and soon the country-

side, freed from the terror of the Reservists, felt the heavy hands of his subordinates.

The thorny question of adjusting the civil service had to be faced, so as not to leave the surplus created by the Salonika administration on the side of the discontented. The reinstatement of civil servants did not prove very difficult, but the reinstatement of officers was not easy, owing to the questions of seniority involved, and the fact that the Royalist officers remained as a whole irreconcilable, passionately attached to ex-King Constantine. The new administration was confronted at the outset with the grave problems of military insubordination.

On August 26, 1917, Venizelos explained in a memorable speech to the Assembly the reasons for his policy from the beginning of the war; of his attempts to join the Allies; of his conflicts with King Constantine. His speech took eight hours to deliver, and was on the Demosthenian model both for length and lucidity. All the artifices of oratory were employed. Now the deputies were stung to anger by the recitation of the King's treachery, now elated by the prospect of victory, now aroused by the stark narrative of Ottoman cruelty, swayed hither and thither by the power and magnetism of the orator, listening in hushed silence, not to a parliamentary speech, but to an enormous political and historical treatise. It was his *apologia*, a historic survey and a trumpet-call to action. After tracing the development of Greek history from 1910 to 1915, contrasting the position of Greece as between these two dates, Venizelos dwelt on the policy of the several Governments under Constantine and the "truly alarming success that had attended their efforts." The ministers of Germany and Bulgaria had promised Premier Skouloudes on May 22, 1916, that "the individual liberty, property rights and established religious conditions will be respected." Four days later the Central Powers and Bulgaria invaded Greek territory and there were massacres, pillage, usurpation of authority, confiscation of public revenues, persecutions. "These have been the rewards of pro-German neutrality," he cried. "The followers of the German policy in Greece," Venizelos said, "sought to persuade the people that their disagreement with the policy of the Liberal Party consisted in this: the Liberals tried to apply

a radical policy and to realise the national aspiration, but such a policy involved dangers. They, on the other hand, claimed that they were seeking to apply a conservative policy, by which, for the time being, the realisation of the national aspirations was abandoned, but what was in our possession was safe and war was avoided.

"This is not true. By their policy nothing was conserved. We neither saved what we possessed in Eastern Macedonia and Northern Epirus, nor did we maintain the balance of power in the Balkans, which was overthrown at our expense by our hereditary rival. Nor did we avoid the horrors of war.

"The adherents of the former King's policy knew that by allowing the French troops to land in Salonika and not at the same time hastening to the aid of the Serbians, they would bring the theatre of war within our Macedonian territory. They did not even try to prevent such a calamity, because it would harm the German interests. If our policy had been followed, enemies would never have invaded our territory, even if we had not beaten the Bulgarians; and we should now possess Eastern Macedonia, Northern Epirus and Cyprus, which the British offered us. But even if we supposed that the Central Empires should win—an impossibility—Greece would come to the Peace Conference with her national soil intact, even enlarged by Cyprus, and assisted by five or six Great Powers.

"It might have been called a conservative policy if, for all its betrayal of alliance with Serbia, it had taken care, while observing a very benevolent neutrality toward Serbia, to secure the inviolability of the national territory by checking the undue expansion of Bulgaria, the preservation of Hellenism in Asia Minor, Thrace and Macedonia, the immunity of our mercantile fleet, and a guarantee of our integrity for a period of ten years after the war. And nobody, gentlemen, can maintain that all this was not attainable, for Greece at the beginning had a general mobilisation, which might at least have been made use of for attaining it. For my part, even if such a policy as this had been pursued, I should have been one of its most bitter opponents, because I should have been stirred by the idea that Greece had dishonoured herself by disowning her obligations, and because it

would have created for Greece a position of subservience to Bulgaria in every way.

"But this so-called conservative policy, what did it conserve, and what did it not betray? The ten months' mobilisation, the Bulgarian invasion of Eastern Macedonia, the laying waste of Greek Macedonia, the imprisonment of an army corps—are all these not equivalent to an unsuccessful war? The annihilation of Hellenism in Asia Minor, in Thrace, and Eastern Macedonia, are they not equivalent in themselves to another unsuccessful war? The suppression of every noble sentiment, the instilling of fear and cowardice, the insinuation of the idea not only that any further expansion of the realm was dangerous and unnecessary, but even that the expansion which had resulted from the Balkan wars was injurious, and that the loss of it might be viewed without concern—are not all these again equivalent to another unsuccessful war? Was it then a conservative and peaceful policy that was pursued by the 'Saviours' when they brought upon us the disasters of three unsuccessful wars, and left a final war still hanging over us, the war to be waged against a Greater Bulgaria, the war in which Greece was to have been crushed once for all?

"I see our ally Serbia overthrown, even though her overthrow was only temporary, and will be followed, as I feel sure, by the restoration of her full national unity. I see Bulgaria overwhelmingly aggrandised, and ready to fall upon us to-morrow to crush and subjugate us. I see the régime of internal corruption risen from the dead with a fresh impetus and a fresh vigour. I see the economic wreck. I see the Royal army almost in a state of dissolution.

"Nevertheless, with all these disadvantages, my optimism does not desert me. A nation which for no less than three thousand years has passed through great trials without disappearing, a nation which only yesterday achieved the victories of 1912 and 1913, a nation which, although betrayed by its rulers, succeeded in finding within itself sufficient moral strength to create a new state, to raise a new army, and write, as I have often said, some of the brightest pages of our military history, I am unshakably convinced that such a nation still conceals within itself enough

vitality⁸, even in this last moment, to achieve its own salvation.

"Gentlemen, the nation is aware that I have never promised it anything which was not attainable. The nation knows that I have never fallen short in the promises I have made.

"In taking part in this World War, we shall not only regain the national territories we have lost, we shall not only re-establish our honour as a nation, we shall not only effectively defend our national interests at the Peace Conference and secure our national future, but we shall also be a worthy member of the family of free nations which that Conference will organise. . . ."

In explaining why he did not advise King Alexander to order a new election, he said:

"I wish nobody to think, even for a minute, that if I lacked the deep conviction of our power, given us by a mandate from the Greek people, I could find myself in Athens through the aid of foreigners, however strong protectors and guarantors they might be. The revolution has triumphed and our rivals are forced to recognise us. They accept us as a Cabinet, they tolerate us, if you please, but they tell us 'Why don't you govern without any Chamber?' And they wonder why, since the Government of the scum of politics has been getting along without a Chamber, we do not govern similarly. I should refuse to govern a country without the support of the representatives of the people.

"Then they say, 'Why have you called the Chamber of May 31?' None denies the danger, if not the impossibility, of holding a new election now. This being the case, the convocation of the Chamber of May 31 was logical. The Liberal Party has never, not even for one moment, recognised the legality of the Royal *coup d'état* dissolving that Chamber. We did not participate in the elections of December 6, and later, as we declared clearly to our electors, we did not intend to assume the obligation to sit in a Chamber whose legality we did not recognise, by participating. The King, putting aside the people's suzerainty, meant to concentrate in himself all the power, in order to become a King by the grace of God.

"Even had I considered immediate elections possible, I should have insisted on not accepting the Premiership unless I were permitted to call into existence, at least for a short time, the

unlawfully dissolved Chamber of May 31, that we might have a political precedent in the history of Greece as a lesson for the future.

"Those of you who have visited Westminster Palace, where the British Parliament meets, will recall that at the main entrance there is a tablet with words something like these—I do not remember them exactly: 'Here Charles the King of England was beheaded because he conspired to usurp the liberties of the English people.' Whenever the King goes to Westminster Palace to open and close sessions of Parliament, he passes by that tablet. It has remained there for two and a half centuries, because people worthy of liberty, as are the English people, do not mean to forget the lessons of their history, but to use them for future generations."¹ When he had finished at two o'clock in the morning, 188 deputies out of the 198 present voted for complete confidence in the Government.

Had it been possible for speeches to cure the pangs of hunger or quench the flame of hate, this would certainly have accomplished that object. A divided homeland was more apt to listen to the dictates of prejudice than the call of sanity. Minor Venizelist officials, drunk with victory, exercised authority in a high-handed way. Many Royalists—particularly officers—remained as irreconcilable as ever, and insidiously spread propaganda against Venizelos and against the war. Moreas and Attico-Bœotia, being always under Royal control, remained unshakably in opposition. The officers having stampeded the people, the work of mobilisation was slow and difficult. Some areas had to be mobilised district by district and class by class. In spite of precautions, there were several mutinies of the Reservists and sanguinary clashes with the *gendarmes*. The mutinies were quickly suppressed and several of the ringleaders were shot. This, in a state of civil strife, left a painful impression and a bitter memory.

¹ "Vindication of Greek National Policy. Report of speeches in the Greek Chamber, August 24-26, 1912," and Gibbons's *Venizelos*, pp. 199-200 and 209-216.

The Government was determined to crush the power of the Reservists. Repoules—the new Minister of the Interior—declared in an answer to a parliamentary question that the Government was determined to stamp out anarchy and rule according to the Constitution. But it could not tolerate any actions likely to impair the fighting capacity of the nation in state of war. "Of persecution there will be none," he declared. "The Liberals have brought an olive branch from Salonika as against the bayonets of terrorisation of their rivals. But those who recommend harmony cannot afford to recommend indulgence and pardon for the great criminals among the guilty ones . . . Yes, there will be forgiveness for the unfortunate, for those who were blinded and dragged astray behind the chariot of despotism, because that is what justice and humanity demand. But we cannot leave our work unguarded against vampires, against new conspiracies and dangers." Indeed there was no hesitation in the work of maintaining order and having authority respected!

By the autumn, order was restored and the Government, having overcome all opposition, adopted measures to safeguard its immediate future existence against any contingency. As soon as Venizelos felt that he could safely leave the country he visited the *entente* capitals. There were many questions to be discussed and settled. He brought Greece into the war without guarantees and without any promise as to her share of the spoils of victory. He did not bargain beforehand, relying as always on voicing his demands at the opportune moment. Defining his demands in advance would have been equivalent to limiting his vision of future acquisitions. The blockade of Greece, although officially lifted, was unofficially maintained by Allied interference with Greek shipping, and Greece as an ally suffered little less than Greece as a neutral. The task confronting him was not easy. The Allies were not accustomed to such insistence from representatives of small nations. Clemenceau who had just succeeded M. Painlevé in the Premiership of France, was an opponent of the Salonika expedition. Lloyd George, on the other hand, whose resourcefulness and visionary genius had already successfully tackled the submarine menace, and who looked on the Balkan front as the place for the knock-out blow against the

Central Powers (it constituted for him the terrain and offered all other attributes, psychological, political and military for the full play of the element of surprise) felt instinctively drawn to Venizelos. Had it not been for Lloyd George's sympathetic understanding, Venizelos's trip, timed after the disaster of Caporetto, the staggering slaughter of Passchendaele, and the mutinies of the French army, would have ended in a diplomatic cold douche.

He had to argue, to expostulate with those who, unnerved by the new German threat against Paris, clung to the formula that the war must be won on the Western front, and point out that Macedonia was no less important. Venizelos insisted that the Allied effectives should be maintained and even more reinforcements should be sent, and pressed for munitions and equipment for the newly-forming Greek divisions. Greece suffered severely from the blockade. She needed food and fuel. Along with Italy and France, Greece now raised her voice for English coal.

Socially his visit to Europe was a success. Everywhere he was welcomed with almost royal honours. He enlisted moral and to an extent material support for Greece, and impressed upon the Allies the decisive part the Greek army had to play in the Eastern campaign.

* * *

The Greek army was laboriously being built up. In the spring of 1918, Greece had almost 200,000 men—raised to 300,000 in the summer—under arms ready to undertake the offensive. Still no great trust was placed by the Allies in the effectiveness of the Greek army. Venizelos had to intervene and persuade the Allied Generals. His request that Greek troops be used by General Nider on the Struma front was conceded. They covered themselves with glory in the operation of April 15. On May 30, four Greek regiments, under the command of General Guillaumat, carried the heights of Skra-di-Legen in a brilliant bayonet charge. This proved a milestone in the Macedonian theatre of war. The Greek soldiers, in spite of the campaigns of 1912-13, were considered by military strategists to be of poor quality. All they were credited with was the matchless capacity

for headlong flight, demonstrated in 1897. But Skra-di-Legen won for them the esteem of the Allies, and gave the Greek army as a whole confidence in itself. The dash and courage of the troops, their steady advance, under withering fire, in order to get at their opponents with their bayonets, drew a telegram of congratulation from General Guillaumat to Venizelos telling him that "this victory will fill all Greece with legitimate pride."¹

When General Franchet d'Esperey, a competent imaginative soldier, who succeeded General Sarrail in command of the Allied forces in Macedonia, made his plans for a general offensive in September, Venizelos was dissatisfied with the positions allocated to the Greek troops. He wanted the Greek army to play an important part on all the fronts of the Macedonian offensive, and asked Franchet d'Esperey to modify his plans accordingly. Not satisfied with a vague promise, he visited the General Headquarters and camped there till d'Esperey finally allocated five different points on the line of attack to the Greeks.

In the final offensive (September) which made the first breach in the iron ring of the Germanic coalition, the Greek troops played an important role; wherever a big break was effected there was a Greek division (placed there by Venizelos's foresight) to march forward with the Allies into the liberated territories. The Fourteenth Greek Division, co-operating with the Sixteenth British Army Corps, crossed the Bulgarian frontier first. The Bulgarian front line was pierced decisively in several places. After being hammered incessantly for a week, the Bulgarians were in full flight all along the line, pursued by their traditional enemy—the Greeks. On September 25, the Bulgarian Commander-in-Chief, General Todorov, made overtures for peace. Four days later, the Bulgarian delegates signed an armistice at Salonika, accepting unconditional surrender to the Allies. General Milne, writing to General Dangles about the achievements of the Greek troops, stated that without their aid "the present victory could not have been obtained."

¹ This was duly appreciated by the Allies as one of the decisive battles of the Eastern Front. In the march of victory in Paris in 1919, along with the names of Marne, Somme, Verdun, etc., appeared the name of Skra-di-Legen.

As yet, only Bulgaria was out. Greek divisions advanced to the Mesta River ready for a drive against Turkey. Other contingents along with the Serbians and the French, pursued the Austro-German troops out of Serbia. With the capitulation of Bulgaria, the Turks were left isolated. Routed in Syria and Mesopotamia, with a threatened invasion of Thrace, Enver and Talaat resigned, and their successors began negotiations with the Allies, which ended in the armistice of Moudros on October 30. The two mortal enemies of Greece lay prostrate and defeated. Venizelos had triumphed.

The first blow against the Central Powers also proved decisive. One more—the last—flicker of anguish, and the carnage ended in the West with the defeat of Germany.

CHAPTER X

VICTORY AND . . . DEFEAT

TOWARDS the end of 1918 the political and military representatives of the Allied and Associated Powers assembled in Paris to make peace. After the preliminary formalities, this august assembly settled down to pronounce judgment, share out the spoils, redraw frontiers, create and obliterate states. Humanity looked to these arbiters of human destinies. A thousand hopes and a thousand fears were centred round these men. Would the defeated Powers escape the cruel reward of retribution; and would the victorious states receive satisfaction for their sacrifices?

Unfortunately, victory did not produce harmony among the victors. The factors of fear and antagonism still affected the counsels of statesmen. There were differences over the division of spoils. There were questionable secret treaties negotiated under the stress of conflict which could not be brought to light in the agenda of the Conference.

* * *

December 1918 found Venizelos in Paris. His assets at the Peace Conference were his own immense personal prestige and the services which Greece had rendered the Allies. He soon made his influence felt, an influence out of proportion to the size and services of his country. While the Great Powers were rapidly demobilising (scarcely six months after the armistice their effective strengths were reduced by fifty per cent.), Venizelos kept the Greek army intact, and took steps to reinforce it by calling two more divisions to the colours. It was this which particularly enhanced his influence on Lloyd George and Clemenceau. The two Powers were caught in the immense backwash of post-war reaction. Their armies were dissolving. Only the Greeks appeared ready to do anything and go anywhere. Clemenceau, obsessed by the Russian revolution, sought to wreak the vengeance of capitalist France upon the Bolsheviks, and Venizelos was persuaded to assist the French intervention armies in Odessa with two Greek divisions. The expedition

ended in a fiasco, with the mutiny of the French Black Sea Fleet. Venizelos quickly saw—not quickly enough, however—the madness of prolonging the intervention, and ordered the withdrawal of his troops; but not before some five hundred of them had sacrificed their lives for the interests of European finance and capital.¹

In Paris, before the Supreme Council of the Allies, the Greek delegation argued the Greek claims for the annexation of Thrace, for Smyrna with a good part of its hinterland, and for the internationalisation of Constantinople.² But the number of

¹ In a letter to the author fifteen years later, Venizelos sought to justify this unfortunate adventure on the grounds that it was demanded by France. By helping France in her war of intervention against Soviet Russia he expected to enlist French support for the Greek occupation of Anatolia and Thrace. He did not have any quarrel with the Bolsheviks, he stated, more so as the latter had renounced any claims of territorial acquisition, which meant that they forfeited Imperial Russia's claims on Constantinople. The whole venture was undertaken purely for diplomatic reasons in order to enhance the prestige of Greece among the Allies. The above reveals how far Venizelos travelled since the days of 1905 when in Crete he had to face the interventionist troops of the Tsar sent to buttress the reactionary Government of Prince George.

² This is how Venizelos describes the presentation of the Greek claims in a letter to the acting Prime Minister, M. Repoules, on February 4, 1919:—

“For 3½ hours yesterday and to-day I have spoken to the Conference—or rather to the Council—in support of the territorial claims of Greece and defended them to the best of my ability.

“I think that the impression created by my exposé was a favourable one. Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George and even Orlando reassured me of this when taking leave of them. And from other quarters I heard that they expressed themselves in the same favourable way after I left the Conference Room. At the conclusion of to-day's sitting, Orlando expressed himself sympathetically about ‘the noble nation represented by Venizelos,’ believing, he said, that that nation ‘will receive satisfaction of its righteous claims’ and reassured me that the differences between ourselves and Italy would be composed in a friendly spirit. The new declaration of Signor Orlando is a clear indication that our demands have been very well received, and, consequently, Orlando considered it advantageous in the interests of Italy to declare that he will not oppose any of our national claims which would be approved by the other Powers.

“These expressions of sympathy do not, however, imply that the total of our demands will be accepted. But the progress we have achieved during the last four months is considerable. Italy hoped then to occupy Smyrna and not only has ceased to demand it now, but recognises our own privileges, and demands only the possession of the Meander Valley. It is almost certain that she will even give up the Meander Valley, although it is by no means certain whether our possessions will be extended so as to cover the whole western coast of Asia Minor or that the lower part of it will remain under Turkey.

"What is even more astounding is that our demand for the possession of Thrace up to the Black Sea is earnestly and at the same time favourably debated. The loss of the Aegean coastline to Bulgaria is something which will inevitably meet with great opposition. But it is of great interest to us that the subject is seriously considered, and that in a friendly spirit."

He proceeds to castigate the policy of Constantine from 1915 to 1917, which dealt Greece a heavy moral blow and robbed her delegates at the Conference of the position they would have occupied had Greece declared earlier for the Allies. He hopes that the greatest part of the Greek national dream is likely to be realised. "I consider it certain that we shall be given Smyrna, Kydonia and part of the hinterland which I cannot at present define. Also Cyprus and the Dodecanese at the expense of one or two islands and half of Northern Epirus.

"I am daily convinced that for Greece to become in reality an independent state—in so far as a small state can be independent—it is necessary to rehabilitate firmly our good relations with Italy. Only when we are in complete accord with the three Mediterranean Powers shall we be in a position to adopt an independent policy in relation to all three."

He further asks the acting Prime Minister to appeal to the Press to put an end to the anti-Italian campaign, and even to take the necessary action to see that the Government's request is carried out. While the question of Smyrna was still in the dark, he took the bold step of suggesting the formation of a Smyrna *gendarmerie* and police units, ready to take up their duties when the time came. He also suggested that the Commissioner for Epirus, M. Sterghades, should be in readiness to take up the post of High Commissioner in Smyrna when he was called upon to do so. He asked that the utmost secrecy should be observed concerning the destination of the police units and the *gendarmerie* that were to be formed.

* * *

A month later (March 3, 1919) Venizelos, writing again to M. Repoules, reveals the change which had come over the Allies concerning the Greek claims. The Italians objected to the transference of the Dodecanese on the grounds that they had been assigned to Italy by the treaty of April 1915 (as a result of which the Italians entered the war). Britain and France supported the Italian attitude, but the American delegate objected, saying that he "considered that treaty not binding, and that he could not understand how Italy could legitimately lay claims to islands preponderately Greek without violating those principles which have been accepted as the basis of future peace."

But it was chiefly the question of Smyrna that worried Venizelos. "While our instalment in Asia Minor," he wrote, "was considered the most secure part of our national claims the discussions revealed that besides the Italians—with whom every attempt at reconciliation must be considered at present as having definitely failed—the Americans also look upon it with disfavour, without however condemning it entirely. England and France supported us warmly, though not all the way." The Americans insisted on the preservation of an undivided Asia Minor, and were supported by the Italians, who maintained that Greece in Asia Minor would deprive them of a territory claimed as theirs, according to the agreement of St. Jean de Maurienne. In the ensuing discussion, England asked whether America would consider giving Greece a mandate over Western Anatolia under the League of Nations. America seemed inclined to support such a solution, and after some more discussion the Conference adjourned.

factors involved, the statistics asked for in order to enable President Wilson to make up his mind, the tendency of the Council of Ten and subsequently the Council of Four to shelve the controversial issues of the Eastern question and proceed with the signing of peace with Germany, combined to keep the future of Greece in suspense.

But Venizelos was both undaunted and tireless. He presented memoranda, he interviewed editors, spoke to politicians, addressed meetings with only one aim—make the victors conscious of the righteousness of the Greek demands. His army was kept in readiness, and his colleagues in Athens waited for the signal—the overcoming of Wilson's and Orlando's opposition—to march into Turkish territories. The work was realised in stages. Italy, angered by the scanty recognition of her claims in Dalmatia and Asia Minor, and with the lingering crisis over Fiume, staked her fortunes in Anatolia. On March 29, 1919, Italian forces were landed and occupied Adalia (not far from the Dodecanese) and gradually proceeded to occupy the coast towards Smyrna. According to the agreement of St. Jean de Maurienne, Italy was given Smyrna, the promise made dependent on the consent of Russia. But since then Kerensky had been overthrown, and the Soviet Government had repudiated all secret treaties. Britain and France could not invoke Russian refusal to curb Italy. The only way to stop the Italians was to forestall them. But how? By Allied occupation? The *entente*, having won a Pyrrhic victory, was exhausted militarily as well as financially, and the growth of the Labour movement imposed a powerful restraint on imperialist adventures abroad. In the summer of 1919, they had their last chance of forcing obedience to their will. Germany was defeated, but not crushed, and the Allied troops were locked up in the interior of Germany, in Constantinople, and in Asia Minor, while other units were fighting in Mesopotamia and Syria. Their only hope of enforcing their decisions was the greater exhaustion of their enemies and the latter's incapacity to see through the pretence of outward harmony in foreign policies, and the bluff of huge military resources.

Venizelos lurked behind the scenes. He was aware of the difficulties of France and Britain, and knew that to them as well

as to Greece an Italian occupation of Smyrna would be intolerable. He placed an account of the Greek forces before the Triumvirate. He was asked to assist in the occupation (his claim on Smyrna had not yet been conceded) and complied with the same eagerness—as Mr. Winston Churchill aptly puts it, as “a duck takes to water.” He did not ask for guarantees or assistance in the event of having to fight a single-handed war with Turkey. That he was going there at the behest of the Allies was considered an adequate guarantee.

Here it is necessary to go briefly over the motives which inspired Venizelos in taking this tragic step. Did he believe that Britain and France, who had urged him on, would be by his side in adversity? In 1911 he declared in his capacity of Premier, that “international morality does not exist,” implying that no one else would fight your battles and grant you your rights unless you were strong enough to get them yourself. Now he was prepared to act as mandatory to the three great Powers against the designs of Italy. And here, essentially, lies the difference. While to the Allies Smyrna was a square in the military-political chessboard of the Conference, for Venizelos it was an inevitable stage towards the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the liberation of Greece. But how could this liberation be accomplished? In order that one and a half to two million Greeks should escape from Ottoman administration it was necessary that five million Turks should come under Greek or Allied rule. The Gladstonian cry of throwing the Turks, bag and baggage, out of Europe became the slogan of post-war Greece, with the additional objective that the Turk ought to be pushed not only out of Europe, but far into the depths of Asia Minor. Needless to say, such a policy was fraught with danger. Venizelos has been criticised for having erred in placing too much confidence in his allies. On the contrary, he grasped the opportunity afforded him without guarantees because it coincided with his plans, and he hoped that by so doing, his claims would eventually be recognised and granted.

In a telegram from Paris to the Greek Minister in Constantinople on May 6, 1919, Venizelos said, “Please communicate confidentially to the French Commander-in-Chief that this

morning I was informed by the Prime Ministers of England and France and the President of the U.S.A. that they have decided to occupy Smyrna immediately, entrusting the actual occupation to the Greek army."¹ The grave decision was taken. Now was the time for quick action. Secret telegrams were sent the same day to M. Repoules in Athens and General Paraskevopoulos in Salonika, asking them to arrange without delay for the transportation of the first Greek division to Ionia. Strict instructions were given that everything should be done with the utmost secrecy. During the following week Venizelos was in a state of delirious excitement. He flooded Athens, Salonika and Constantinople with telegrams urging them on, giving instructions, arranging for the dispatch of *gendarmes* to Chios, near enough to follow the troops, advising M. Stergiades to be ready to take up his duties, and so on. The preparations were carried out in such secrecy that even the troops taking part knew nothing about it. Only when they were in Smyrna harbour and the stirring message of Venizelos was read to them, did they and the world realise that Greece was about to plant herself in Asia Minor.

On May 14, 1919, Greek troops, assisted by Allied warships, landed and took formal occupation of the city. The die was cast. The issues were now clear. Peace for Greece had brought war, and a Greek war for the destruction of Turkey. It was the only thing that would weld together and invigorate Turkey, and it proved to be the signal for the pro-Turkish elements in Britain and France to come to the surface once again. The armistice with Turkey made very incomplete provisions for Turkish disarmament, and there were considerable numbers of Turkish regulars ready to oppose the Greeks if they happened to push beyond Smyrna into the Anatolian interior.

* * *

The occupation of Smyrna was not accomplished peacefully. Although the Turkish military did not offer great resistance, Turkish citizens attacked the landing troops. Skirmishes took place in the streets, and about twenty Turks were shot down and many more wounded or otherwise maltreated. Lurid stories

¹ *Athenaika Nea*, May 15, 1919.

about Greek violation of Turkish girls were disseminated by Turkish propaganda. Undoubtedly excesses did occur, but systematic propaganda enlarged them into gruesome stories, in order to arouse anti-Greek feeling and prove the incapacity of the Greeks to rule over a mixed population.

Venizelos, to his credit, acted promptly. Proceedings were begun at once against the accused under a court-martial. Two colonels were asked to resign their commissions and a third subjected to forty days rigorous imprisonment and subsequent dismissal. Forty-eight Greeks, thirteen Turks, twelve Armenians and one Jew involved in the riots were placed on trial. Three Greeks were executed and all the remainder sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. But this did not quell the storm aroused. An inter-Allied commission, consisting of British, French, American and Italian officers, was sent to investigate, but its report was never published, because the recommendation of the Supreme Council for the inclusion of a Greek officer in the commission was overlooked.¹ Several other factors contributed to the suppression of the commission's report, one being the intensely pro-Turkish bias of its head, Admiral Bristol of the American navy. Witnesses for the accused were never heard. Only confirmed opponents to the Greeks were questioned, and practically all the witnesses were drawn from the Turkish population.

¹ Lloyd George, answering a question in the House of Commons on March 22, 1920, about the report, said that it was considered *inadvisable* "to allow the Report of the Commission in question to be published owing to the conditions under which the enquiry was conducted. As the Commission was investigating charges against the Greek army, the Supreme Council decided that a Greek officer should be allowed to follow the proceedings, but not to vote or take part in the preparation of the Report. The Commission, however, when it began its inquiries, decided not to allow any Greek representative to be present, on the grounds that Turkish witnesses might be afraid of giving evidence. M. Venizelos immediately protested against this procedure on the ground that it was contrary to the rules of justice in every civilised country that charges should be investigated and witnesses heard without the accused person being allowed to know the charges and the evidence against him. The Supreme Council were of opinion that M. Venizelos's protest was justified, but before it could alter the procedure, the enquiry was completed. In as much as it has not been possible to communicate to the Greek Government the evidence against them upon which the Commission's Report has been based owing to pledges given to witnesses, the British Government thinks it *inadvisable* and *unfair* to publish the Report itself."

The suppression of this report became a vital issue among the Turcophil British Conservatives. No less than a dozen questions were raised about it in the House of Commons. It was thought to contain such devastating disclosures against Greek administrative incompetence that it would enable them to rebuff Venizelos and throw out Lloyd George. It served as a signal for an attack on Greece. Atrocities were easily forgotten once the purpose of arousing hostility against Greece was served, and the attack was concentrated on defeating Greece's Anatolian venture. Such was the outcry that Venizelos, writing to M. Repoules, could not help mentioning the harm done to Greece by the investigation, adding that he could not comprehend the animosity displayed by the western nations against the Greece of Anatolia since the time of the Crusaders. Not only Conservatives, but even well-meaning intellectuals, began to attack Venizelos's policy. Professor A. J. Toynbee made by far the most sustained and searching analysis of the whole question in his book on the *Eastern Question in Turkey and Greece*. Every aspect of the Venizelist policy is there laid bare and criticised. "What had happened to Mr. Venizelos?" he writes. "Before the formal presentation of his claims to the Council of Ten, he expressed unlimited optimism about the practicability of carrying them out. He refused to admit that in opening the Anatolian question he was implicitly reopening the question of the islands; maintained that the Greek army could hold his projected Anatolian frontier on a peace footing; and suggested that so long as they were given economic outlets to the sea, Bulgaria and Turkey would be reconciled to the losses of territory and population which he hoped to inflict upon them. Had he simply been infected by the hysterical atmosphere of the Peace Conference? Had the sudden passage from the verge of defeat to apparently absolute victory blinded him to the fact that the momentarily prostrate enemy nations would some time become Powers again? Had his head been turned by his western colleagues' recognition of his personal qualities? All these things happened to other prominent members of the Conference, but it is difficult to believe that a statesman with such a long experience, such a record of liberalism and moderation, and so much intellectual originality and strength of will, can have based an

elaborate programme upon passing impulses and emotions. These may have weakened his judgment, they can hardly have overthrown it. The less improbable explanation is that his optimism was largely feigned, that he was taking the risks with his eyes open, and that his policy was decided partly by some *force majeure* and partly by the expectation that the dangers, while real, could be discounted by some effective means of insurance."

Mr. Toynbee proceeded to arraign Lloyd George, whom he considered as more responsible than any other statesman "for the substantial triumph at the Conference of Mr. Venizelos's claims" (p. 73). "Did the Welsh and the Cretan statesmen deceive themselves or one another? Something was wrong with their calculations, for the bargain turned out badly for both. Probably each deceived himself, and that by overestimating the other's power, in contingent circumstances, to perform more than his bond. . . . Each party may have been reckoning, for insurance, upon greater efforts being forthcoming, in case of need, from the other when once committed to action. If Mr. Venizelos were playing for Thrace and Smyrna, would he hesitate to borrow a few more millions, and a few more divisions, sacrifice a few more lives in order to win the game? And if Mr. Lloyd George were playing for ascendancy in the Straits and indeed throughout the Levant, would he not in the last resort reinforce the Greek army with his own to gain so great a prize?" (pp. 75 and 76). There was no suggestion whatever in this bulky book of how the different problems could be solved. Venizelos indeed staked his fortunes at Smyrna for economic and political reasons. The rich and fertile province of Aidin and the industriousness of its inhabitants would add enormously to the finances of Greece. Smyrna and Thrace were coveted territories to Venizelos. It was for their incorporation into the Greek kingdom that he opposed the King, divided the nation, and entered the war. To relinquish them now would have been treachery to those who flocked to the colours in order to achieve their possession. Every Greek considered them as the inalienable right of Greece by long historic tradition. To Lloyd George, the strengthening and enlargement of Greece was a

question of prestige and a means of fortifying British influence in the Levant. Psychologically and by temperament he was on the side of Venizelos. He hated Turkish tyranny as did no other public man in the British Isles. During the years of the war he reserved his most resounding oratorical thunders for the "Contemptible Empire of the Bosphorus." He was, at the time, in difficulties with France over Mesopotamia and Mosul. There was the "burning" question of the ownership of "oil." Hence the quarrel! By assisting Greece he would have a strong friend in the Levant against both France and Turkey. In this matter he had to face not only the opposition of his Allies, but that of his Cabinet and the Conservative Party, which did not forget Disraeli's pro-Turkish eulogies. "The Greeks have a lasting sense of gratitude," he declared, waived aside all opposition, and supported Venizelos through thick and thin.

One important thing which Professor Toynbee and the Conservatives ignored was the fate of the million and a half Greeks under Turkish rule. Nobody troubled to think of them. Turkish policy was bent on the extermination of that unfortunate multitude. Since 1909 the efforts of the masters of Turkey were directed towards that goal, and the Balkans and European wars had accentuated the drive. There were only two ways open to save them. Either by transportation *en masse* to the Greek kingdom or by the creation of an enclave round Smyrna (or an autonomous state embracing Western Anatolia) which would not only be an island of refuge for the Greeks driven out of their homes by Neo-Turkish nationalism, but also a stronghold which, by its very proximity, would act as a restraint upon the attempts of the Turks to assimilate those Greeks who persisted in clinging to their homes in Turkish territory. Either Greece—the victor state—had to resign herself to the position of passively watching while the Greeks were bundled out of Asia Minor, or undertake such action as was calculated to guarantee their peaceful existence—or at least the rudimentary necessities of life. Venizelos decided on the latter. No other solution was practicable save occupation, since the Supreme Council would not consider placing Smyrna, Constantinople and other territories with mixed populations under the administration of the League of Nations,

with High Commissioners drawn from neutral countries, such as the Scandinavian States, Switzerland and Holland.

The months dragged wearily on. The Allies still haggled in Paris over Germany and the successor states of the Dual Monarchy. The Eastern question was left until the following year, while the Greeks remained provisionally in occupation of Smyrna, and the Turkish irregular armed forces, retreating beyond the limit assigned to the Greek army of occupation, were trained by Mustapha Kemal Pasha into a Turkish nationalist army.

On November 27, 1919, was signed the Treaty of Neuilly, by which Bulgaria was deprived of her frontage on the Aegean, which was ceded to Greece. The Allies undertook to ensure Bulgaria, and Greece agreed to grant her, an outlet to the Aegean. With Western Thrace, Bulgaria lost her valuable tobacco plantations and the Dedeagatch Railway. This was the first official reward for Greek participation in the war. Meanwhile, Venizelos's Anatolian occupation was exciting considerable antagonism from influential quarters in Britain and France. The administration of the Greek Commissioner, M. Stergiades, was a constant source of criticism. There were many bloody encounters between Greeks and Turks in Aidin during the summer, and many cases of arson, murder and pillage on both sides. Many unofficial observers, attracted by the exciting task of investigation, toured the province, and came back with perverted stories of their particular brand of bias, which helped to keep the Press at a crescendo of fury against Greece. When the Supreme Council met in London in February 1920 the presentation of the Greek case was opposed by strong Turkish propaganda. The Beaverbrook and Rothermere Press discovered suddenly that Britain, in supporting Greece against Turkey, was endangering her own stability and antagonising the Moslems of India who looked upon the Caliph (Sultan) as their titular head. Bowing to the storm, the Supreme Council decided to allow the Sultan to remain in Constantinople, where it was thought he would be more amenable to Allied persuasion. But by doing so

they only preserved the fiction of his authority, as the Sultan's power did not extend beyond the confines of Constantinople and the Ismid Peninsula—places over which Allied rule and influence were exercised. In Anatolia the Government of Mustapha Kemal Pasha was the real authority. And this redoubtable warrior, though prescribed by the Sultan, was able in a few months, not only to defeat the forces sent against him by the Sultan, but to create an army out of guerrilla fighters, disciplined and fairly well equipped, and to arouse the dejected and defeated Turks by his whirlwind oratorical tours into a desperate spirit of resistance and war!

It was rumoured at the time that England intended to make an end of the Turkish State. But the Millerand Cabinet—which had just been formed—officially modified the policy of France in favour of preserving Turkey's integrity. Venizelos's policy was assailed from all sides. From the Conservative Party and Press, from India, Paris, Rome and Washington rose the chorus of criticism. All the forces which two years earlier had accorded him a tumultuous acclamation when he entered the war, now rose in hostile array. Only Lloyd George stood unwaveringly by the side of the Greek Premier. But the price of defying this opposition proved later to be excessively costly in wealth and blood.

* * *

At a further Conference at San Remo the Allies completed the draft treaty of peace with Turkey and handed it to the Turkish delegates (May 11, 1920). For more than a year the statesmen of Europe had hedged and haggled over Turkey. They had attempted to safeguard the Sultanage and had succeeded instead in destroying it. When the time came to sign the treaty, the *entente* Powers had to deal with a Government with no authority, and neither they nor the Sultan had the power to compel the Turks to yield to the terms of the treaty peacemakers. Mustapha Kemal, secretly encouraged and supplied with arms and ammunition by Italy and France, had been ceaselessly embarrassing the Allied army of occupation. He had driven the British from the Ismid Peninsula and attempted to bombard Constantinople. In Thrace there were similar disorders. The only force capable of

dealing at the time with the Turks was the Greek army. For Venizelos, the signing of treaties was not the end of the story. Liberation was to be won, not granted. For twenty months he kept his army in readiness on the Thracian frontier and in the Province of Smyrna. At the beginning of July, at another Conference at Spa, Venizelos asked for a mandate from the Supreme Council to restore order, both in Thrace and Western Anatolia, promising to do so within a fortnight.

The mandate was given, though France consented with reluctance. French equivocal policy was particularly repugnant to Venizelos. "Officially" the French were still the allies of Greece and Britain. But they came to grips with the British over Mosul and "unofficially" were supplying arms to Kemal. Throughout the winter, the French Press never tired of demanding that the Greek occupation of Smyrna should be temporary, and that the changed circumstances of 1920 demanded different solutions from those of 1919. On March 26, Venizelos telegraphed to Athens and expressed his fears as follows: "The French Government's action in regard to Greece becomes more and more disturbing. As a result of a report from the Allied High Commissioners in Constantinople, declaring that it is impossible to impose the peace terms on Turkey, the French Premier proposed a revision of the Supreme Council's resolutions. This was rejected by Britain. But we run the risk, all through these negotiations, of seeing France act against our interests, for the present Premier is entirely under the influence of financial circles."¹ At the time the French were involved in difficulties with the Arabs in Syria and the Turks in Cilicia. Restoration of relations with Turkey meant trading advantages and the disposition of surplus war stocks. Furthermore, a strong Greece under the protection of Britain was considered calamitous to French interests, cherished so preciously by French financiers since the days of Louis Napoleon. Foch and other French generals, acting on the advice of their Government, sought to dissuade Venizelos from attempting punitive expeditions against the Turks and advised him to withdraw from Smyrna.

¹ Greek secret diplomatic documents published by *Matin*, December 2, 1922, quoted by M. Cosmetatos, *The Tragedy of Greece*, p. 303.

The British Cabinet was by no means unanimous in supporting Lloyd George. The War Office in particular expressed profound misgivings about the capacity of the Greek army to restore order. Mr. Winston Churchill and Sir Henry Wilson were delegated to communicate the British military view to Venizelos. To many and searching questions about the state of the Greek army, Venizelos gave satisfactory replies and concluded that though he acknowledged the inequality of warfare, he professed his confidence "that with the support of the three greatest Power she would reach a satisfactory and final conclusion."¹ Thus it was in the face of British doubts and of covert French opposition that Venizelos carried out the mandate given him at Spa.

After a fierce fight, the Greek army under General Paraskeopoulos drove the Kemalist forces back over a front of nearly three hundred miles. In ten days the Greeks reached the Sea of Marmora, captured Brusa, and were able to render assistance to the small British contingents which had been harassed for months by the Turks and driven back almost to the shores of Bosphorus. In Thrace victory was more overwhelming. On July 26, 1920, King Alexander entered Adrianople. "Turkey in Europe" was no more, except for Constantinople and a small area round it under Allied occupation. What had been an insoluble problem, wearily debated for months, was settled, at least in appearance, by force of arms.

The unexpected successes of the Greek army and Venizelos's patient and brilliant diplomacy culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres—the triumph of Venizelos's career. The whole of Thrace up to Chatalja and within twenty miles of Constantinople, including the Gallipoli Peninsula and the northern shore of the Sea of Marmora (the latter two subject to an International Commission which was to exercise control over the Straits), together with the Aegean Islands were ceded to Greece: the Smyrna district and its hinterland was to be administered by Greece (Turkish sovereignty being acknowledged by the exhibition of a nominal symbol) with a local responsible government, at whose request, after five years, the territory might definitely be incorporated in the Greek State. On the same day a Greco-

¹ Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis—the Aftermath*, p. 384.

Italian treaty was signed in which was embodied the Venizelos-Tittoni settlement concluded in Rome on July 29, 1919. Italy recognised Greek claims in Thrace and North Epirus, and in exchange Greece was to grant Italy certain economic facilities in Asia Minor. Italy also agreed to transfer eleven of the islands of the Dodecanese to Greece. Rhodes was to remain Italian as long as England remained in occupation of Cyprus. In the event of Cyprus being ceded to Greece, Italy agreed to hold a plebiscite in Rhodes within fifteen years to determine its final destiny. But, as this treaty was never ratified, Italy did not honour the agreement.

The Treaty of Sèvres represented the crowning of two years of persistent and patient diplomatic work. Venizelos was now satisfied. The sacrifices of ten years were justified by a treaty from which Greece emerged with the addition of several million liberated Greeks and an enlargement of territory, no longer a small Balkan State, but a Mediterranean Power.

Two days later, as Venizelos entered the Gare du Lyon on his way home with the treaty of victory in his pocket, two Greek naval officers (Kyriakos and Tserepes) attempted to assassinate him. Eight shots were fired at him. One bullet lodged in his left shoulder and the other in his thigh. Fortunately the wounds were not serious, and within a fortnight he was able to board the cruiser *Averov* at Marseilles on his return home, after an absence of nearly two years.

* * *

The drama and perplexities of peace and the harrowing days of negotiations were left behind. Greece had realised her ambitions almost in their entirety. But Turkey was not yet vanquished! Somewhere in the interior of Asia Minor Mustapha Kemal Pasha was organising his rugged warriors for a war to the finish against the invaders. The Treaty of Sèvres was so far a success only on paper and could not be enforced save by a long and tortuous war.

During the two years of his absence many changes had come over Greece. With the slackening of restrictive measures after the armistice, Royalist propaganda reappeared and spread its

poison insidiously. The memories of blockade and privation were still fresh. It was easy to probe that open wound; to point out the culprit, the cause of all suffering; to pillory the war-maker! From every quarter the forces of anger and hate assailed Venizelos. Fatigue dominated the nation. The people could not understand why they should suffer during the war and after it. They could not understand why their sons and husbands and brothers should still be with the colours. Were they not made to believe that the Allies would give them everything they wanted when the war was won? Was it necessary to have another war now to decide who was the victor in the last one? For ten years the people had been kept on a war footing. They had seen their territories increase, but their ranks were thinned by death, and their standard of living, instead of improving, had sunk lower. Many of them had liked and trusted Venizelos blindly. They knew that he was on their side. But now he was asking too much. There is a limit to human trust and human endurance. During his absence they lacked his guidance and invigorating presence. They felt the harsh authority of his subordinates. The acting Prime Minister, M. Repoules, was a weak, emotional man, of the type that makes pigmy dictators. Many of the others were both brutal and dishonest. Royalist propaganda was announcing daily that Greece was heading for catastrophe; France had deserted her friend and ally, Venizelos; the Foreign Office was against him; Lloyd George had no support in his Cabinet; Turkey was not defeated and it was foolish to continue the fight; there were crimes perpetrated in Asia Minor by both sides, revolting civilisation! For all these Venizelos was held responsible. Everyone had looked forward to peace and comfort, and instead there was disillusionment, war and misery. These conditions gave birth to hostility. And the more that hostility asserted itself, the more heavily was the blame laid upon Venizelos.

The attempt on Venizelos in Paris revealed the state of division which rended the nation. On the following day, the Venizelists took heavy reprisals for the attempted assassination of their chief. Royalist clubs and premises were sacked, many persons were beaten and the houses of prominent members of the opposition

looted. The Premier's Cretan guards shot down in the street M. Jon Dragoumes, a brilliant writer and diplomatist and the son of an ex-Premier. Venizelos telegraphed a strong protest from Paris, but failed to take any action against the culprits on his return.

Still suffering from the effects of his wounds, and speaking in a low voice, he introduced to the Chamber on September 7, 1920, the fruits of his labour in Western Europe—the treaty with Italy, the Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria, and the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey. The Chamber approved his policy and unanimously voted him as the "saviour of Greece." With the incense of gratitude in his nostrils, Venizelos declared that on the imminent dissolution of the Chamber, all restrictions would be abolished, in order that the elections should be held under constitutional conditions. He was a democrat at heart and believed that the ultimate success of his policy depended upon another term of office in which the electorate would give him their confidence. He had the power to prolong his tenure. But, as he stated in the *Eleftheron Vema* of April 21, 1931, in replying to criticisms contained in articles by M. G. Venteres, he had given a pledge after the signing of the treaty, and he could no longer postpone them. He felt that he could no longer remain in office without elections, as he was not of the stuff that dictators are made.

He stipulated that the return of Constantine should not be made an electoral issue. But the death of King Alexander from the bite of a monkey on October 25, changed the position and forced the Government to face a delicate situation. The transformation of Greece into a republic was strongly opposed by Britain and even if for a moment Venizelos had entertained that idea, he could not have carried it out and thus alienate his only remaining ally.

A Regency under Admiral Countouriotis was set up and formally offered the throne to Prince Paul, King Constantine's third son, at that moment with his father in Switzerland. The Prince answered that the throne belonged to his father, and constitutionally, his eldest brother was the successor. As neither of them had renounced his rights, "I would only ascend the throne if the Hellenic people were to decide that it did not want the

return of my august father and were to exclude the Crown Prince George from his right of succession." Venizelos was rebuffed. At first he thought that he had better change the dynasty instead of permitting the opening of the question, but he had to abandon the idea. At a time when he was popular and the King reviled, he thought it safe to pose the question "Constantine or I" and make the restoration of the exiled King a real issue at the general election fixed for November 14.

Later on, however, Venizelos admitted that he made a mistake in not postponing the elections long enough for him to get in touch with King Constantine. He confessed that he had actually written a letter to M. Jonescu asking for Rumania's intervention to persuade Constantine to agree to the accession of his eldest son George. His colleagues objected to third party mediation and, yielding to their advice, he tore the letter up.¹ With his usual buoyancy and optimism, he felt confident that the people would vindicate his policy.

But he failed to account for the stresses and strains through which Greece had passed during the last four years. Nor did he realise how far factional strife had eaten into the vitals of the nation. The opposition consisted of sixteen distinct groups united only by their common hostility to the Cretan.

The result of the elections came as a surprise. Venizelos himself was unseated and only one hundred and twenty Liberals were returned as against two hundred and forty-six members of the opposition. Overnight the Royalists became masters of Greece, and although the Liberals were still the largest single party in the country, the defeat was overwhelming. (Had the elections taken place under proportional representation, Venizelos's 52 per cent. of the total votes would have given him two hundred seats.) The nation had spoken. There was nothing for him to do but resign and flee. Many of his friends implored him to stay and protect his followers from the revenge of the Royalists, and others tried to persuade him to offset the disastrous results of the election and save the nation by a *coup d'état*. The only thing he could do, he replied, was to respect the verdict of the people. All his revolutions had been directed against the

¹ *Eleutheron Vema*, April 21, 1931.

oppressors to give the people a voice, he would not undertake one now in order to suppress that voice.

On November 17, three months after he had signed the Treaty of Sèvres, haggard and worn out by the rapid succession of calamities, Venizelos boarded the private British yacht *Narcissus* and with many of his ministers and officials went into exile. His ten years of rule was ended by the adversity of the polls!

CHAPTER XI

THE ANATOLIAN TRAGEDY

THE vote of November 14 was a vote for peace. The name of Venizelos had become associated with war, and the people expected that the change of Government would bring peace and security.

The new anti-Venizelist Government at once proceeded to arrange a plebiscite for the return of Constantine. They ignored the warning, presented in a Note to M. Rhalles by the Powers on December 3, 1920, that "they had no wish to interfere in the internal affairs of Greece, but they felt bound to declare publicly that the restoration of the throne to a King whose disloyal attitude and conduct towards the Allies during the war had caused them great embarrassment and loss, could only be regarded as a ratification by Greece of his hostile acts." In the event of the King's recall, the Note concluded, the Powers reserved to themselves "complete liberty in dealing with the situation." Without paying much heed to the warning, the Government carried on with the plebiscite in which (as it was given out) 999,954 votes out of the 1,013,724 cast, were for the exiled King. A fortnight later King Constantine and Queen Sophie returned to Athens, where they were received with such a demonstration of welcome that even the Venizelists could not safely abstain from participating.

In a second Note (December 8) the Allies stated categorically that in the event of Constantine's return "Greece would receive no financial assistance" from them whatsoever, and that the two Financial Committees would receive definite instructions to that effect. The Note—intended for publication—was suppressed by the censorship until March 1922, when one of the Venizelist papers secured it surreptitiously and published it.

Constantine's restoration was not recognised by the Allies, and during the two years of his reign there existed in Athens a state of so-called "diplomatic indelicacy." Ministers accredited to

the Greek Court were not on speaking terms with the sovereign, and were instructed to ignore his existence. If an Allied Minister and the King should accidentally meet, either during a ceremony or on a morning drive, both would turn their heads and, as an Athenian paper put it, "ignore each other like sulking school-girls"!

Venizelos, in self-imposed exile, was distressed on hearing the news about the Notes from the Powers. He saw that, as a result of the restoration, the very foundations of his diplomacy—the alliance with Great Britain and the friendship of France—were destroyed. Distrusted and accused by the new rulers, he did not cease to exert influence wherever possible for the benefit of his country.

No man was regarded with greater hopes or given a better chance to prove his wisdom in administration than Constantine, and no other man shattered those hopes so quickly and so completely! He returned ostensibly as the "peacemaker," and started his reign by resuming operations against the Turks. His attempt failed. After this reverse on January 30, 1921, Venizelos communicated to Premier Rhalles through the Greek chargé d'affaires in Paris, M. Metaxas, an account of an interview he had in Paris with Mr. Philip Kerr (subsequently Lord Lothian), secretary to Lloyd George. Mr. Kerr had expressed the hope that by now the Greek Government were convinced of the folly of having their armies scattered over a wide front surrounded by a hostile population, while on the other side of the military frontier, Mustapha Kemal was doggedly rallying Turkey to resistance. Venizelos reported his conversation with Mr. Kerr, and suggested that, in view of the unquestionable hostility of the Powers towards the restored King, the Greek forces should be withdrawn from all advanced positions and concentrated within the Sèvres zone. Defence of this territory could easily be entrusted to three Greek divisions or 45,000 men, who were sufficient, in the opinions of the Greek General Staff and of the Allied High Command under Marshal Foch, to hold the Turks. Venizelos went on to say that the following day he saw Mr. Lloyd George, with whom he had had a long conversation. "The Premier explained to me that on account of the return of King

Constantine public opinion in England has materially altered, and he fears that the opposition of public opinion, along with the Franco-Italian hostility, will prevent him from imposing his views. He asked if I considered it possible that Constantine might consent to abdicate after a united *démarche* by the Powers, in order to help Greece." Unfortunately, M. Venizelos was not in a position to reassure Lloyd George. As an alternative, Lloyd George suggested that he himself (Venizelos) should try to mitigate French hostility by utilising his personal influence, and that he should visit London and attempt to rally the Press lords to the support of Greece.

By the time his letter reached Athens the Royalist politicians were at loggerheads over the personnel of a Greek delegation which had been invited to attend a Conference in London, at which both Constantinople and Angora were to be represented. M. Rhalles proposed to lead the delegation as Prime Minister, but M. Gounares, leader of the largest party supporting the Government, demanded that honour for himself. M. Rhalles upheld his claim, having been profoundly impressed by the letter of Venizelos, which he proposed to show to the King, but his rival, through his influence at Court, forced him to resign on February 9, 1921. The prospect of sending Gounares to London, however, did not appeal even to the King himself. Of all the Royalist politicians Gounares was the most obnoxious to the Allies, particularly to France, who had interned him in Corsica during the later stages of the war as "a dangerous enemy." As a compromise, M. Calogeropoulos was asked to form a ministry, and then proceeded to London at the head of the delegation.

At the opening of the Conference (February 21, 1921) Venizelos came to London at the unofficial invitation of the British Government. He hoped to be able to collaborate with the Royalists, and attempts were made to induce M. Calogeropoulos to admit him to the delegation as the representative of the "unredeemed Greeks." M. Calogeropoulos refused to have anything to do with Venizelos, and by his refusal delivered a severe blow to Greek national interests. Venizelos was still the greatest asset Greece could have had at an international conference. He was on friendly terms with many of the leading states-

men of the west, while Royalist Greece had no friends and many enemies. With his immense personal prestige, he could still turn the scales in favour of Greece and the refusal of the delegation to make use of the services he offered freely proved calamitous.

The London Conference dragged on inconclusively. The Allied proposal for the retention of the vilayet of Smyrna under Turkish sovereignty, with a small Greek force stationed in the city itself, while order was to be maintained in the rest of the enclave by a *gendarmerie* under Allied officers, was coldly received by both Greece and Turkey. M. Gounares, who had come to London, brought the Conference to an abrupt end by ordering a general Greek offensive.

In taking this risky step M. Gounares over-estimated both the strength and ability of the Greek army to enforce a decision and the extent of the division existing between Britain and France. Mustapha Kemal's movement had gained considerably in strength during the breathing respite afforded to it by the Greek political crisis. The French, in order to save Cilicia, which was threatened by Kemal's armies, had transferred their diplomatic and financial support to the Turks. The Italians had long since severed all friendly relations with Greece and were secretly supporting Kemal. Only Lloyd George remained the loyal friend of Greece, and he was in difficulties with the India Office and the Aga Khan and many of his Conservative colleagues, who held over him the dark threat that any expression of British hostility to Turkey (the home of the Caliph) would have disastrous consequences among the Indian Moslems. Gounares expected that, by cutting short negotiations in which so many differences of interest and opinion between France and Britain had been revealed, he would force the latter to declare unequivocally for the Greeks. But he had mistaken differences over details for an indication of fundamental political hostility.

On March 24 the Greeks attacked the Turkish Nationalists all along the line, and before the end of the month they had occupied the railway junctions of Afion-Kara Hissar and Eski Shehr on the Angora line. On April 2, the Turks counter-attacked heavily to the north-west of Eski Shehr, and after inflicting 4,000 casualties upon the Greeks, forced them to retreat to their old positions.

M. Calogeropoulos, who had relieved all the higher officers of Venizelist sentiments of their commands and thus conduced to the defeat, felt it his duty to resign, and was succeeded by M. Gounares on April 7, 1921. While the situation in Asia Minor was becoming increasingly difficult, and the army was a prey to dissatisfaction and restlessness, the new Government devoted all its efforts to denouncing Venizelist tyranny, voting compensation to those who had suffered for political reasons since 1917, and allocating money for the erection of monuments to the military mutineers, shot by Venizelos's courts-martial. The treasury was empty, the cost of living was rising, and throughout the country there were symptoms of discontent and opposition against the prolongation of the war. Royalist propaganda, to allay disillusionment, gave out false reports that England was helping King Constantine secretly with money and munitions and that there was no fear of collapse.

Venizelos from his exile did not fail to warn and advise the Government about the folly of pursuing a lone war with Turkey. On June 21, the Allies informed the Greek Government that they were "prepared to attempt the task of conciliation, if the Hellenic Government was disposed to place its interests in their hands." If it accepted, the Powers were "prepared to state the terms upon which their assistance would be proffered, and in the event of their being accepted, to approach the Turkish Government with a view to the immediate suspension of hostilities and to negotiations for the conclusion of peace." The Greek Government, in spite of Venizelos's urgent plea to retrieve their position of unenviable isolation by accepting the mediation of the Powers, failed to avail themselves of the opportunity, declined the offer, thanked the "Great Allies" for their intervention, but regretted that the designed offensive for the enforcement of the Treaty of Sèvres could not now be postponed.

On July 3, Venizelos wrote a letter from Aix-les-Bains to the leader of the Liberal Party, General Dangles, in which he expressed himself very vigorously against the policy of the Government. In view of the importance of the letter and its bearing on subsequent development, we quote it here almost in full:

"The refusal of the Government to accept the mediation of the

Powers is its last crime against Greece. How can it be said that our national policy is pursued by the present Government when by the vote of November 14, and the consequent rupture of our alliance with the Great Powers, the basis of that policy was torn up?

"Was it possible that I should have contemplated a single-handed war against Turkey, without the support of our allies and indeed in opposition to them? It is unfortunate that even the Liberals have failed to understand the true state of affairs, and cherish the illusion that the present Government is carrying out 'our' national policy, and even outdo the Government in their zeal in doing so. With the destruction of our alliance, the continuation of that policy has become an impossibility. Consequently, the present Government could do nothing better than accept a compromise, with the object of stopping the war and preserving what could be saved of the fruits of 'our' policy.

"Such a compromise was suggested by England four months ago, but unfortunately the Government, afraid of public opinion, rejected the proposals, and undertook military operations which resulted in imperilling our position. A new opportunity arose with the offer of mediation by the West. This we have also rejected, although the Powers had not even asked our unconditional acceptance, but were prepared to inform us in advance of the basis on which such mediation could be accepted. *These, according to British views, were to have been the salvation of Thrace up to Chatalja, the autonomy of the vilayet of Smyrna under a High Commissioner appointed by the League of Nations*, who would organise the civil and military power, and when these were to be considered sufficient to maintain order, the Greeks would have been asked to withdraw.

"This solution is undoubtedly less palatable than the Treaty of Sèvres, not only on account of the prospect of the complete evacuation of Smyrna by the Greek army, but chiefly on account of the restrictions imposed by that treaty on Turkish military independence, which constituted for us the greatest guarantee for the future. But this solution was to have been the bitter price we should have to pay for having ignored the warning Note of the Powers. Those politically responsible for these misfortunes

ought to have the courage to warn the people of the price to be paid, however heavy, in order to avoid the immeasurably greater misfortunes we shall have to suffer if we adhere to our policy of self-reliance and continue the war against Turkey entirely isolated.

"When I maintain that our Government has blundered criminally in not accepting the intervention of the Allied Powers, I do not consider that Turkey would have accepted a solution in accordance with the British point of view, but in the event of Turkey's refusal to accept such a solution, Great Britain would have appeared justified, in public opinion, in coming to our support in imposing the Treaty of Sèvres. Now that the refusal has come from us, public opinion in England will not, under any circumstances, allow the Government to assist us, and any help from her in the future is completely out of the question. Thus, having broken every moral bond with our former Allies by rejecting their intervention and resuming the war, we are leading Greece to the brink of catastrophe. Military victory such as will crush the enemy and force him to sign and execute the treaty we shall dictate, is absolutely out of the question, as anyone still retaining his senses can see for himself.

"But since victory is not likely to be ours, and as long as the enemy is aware of our diplomatic isolation and has his capital protected by the Allies from any attack by us, to what other result can resumption of hostilities lead than to our complete economic and military exhaustion, which will place us in the position, after a few months, of having to beg for intervention under conditions incomparably harsher than those already offered. And how can we ignore the danger of Bulgaria taking advantage of our isolation by marching into Thrace and, if not checked, even trying to occupy Salonika?

"Italy is against us. It is tragic that we have not yet realised the full danger which the overt hostility of France constitutes for us, a hostility so deep-rooted, so injurious to the ultimate interests of France, but which yet threatens our own interests with immediate ruin.

"This is the dark picture of the present situation as I see it." This letter illustrates to a remarkable degree the political

realism of Venizelos. There have been many who criticised his Anatolian adventures; many who saw in the erstwhile revolutionary an imperialist crusader; and still more who thought that he had taken on far more than he could achieve. None, however, attempted to answer his arguments about the future of the Greeks of Asia Minor. This letter, however, reveals that Venizelos the statesman was a realist with a shrewd practical understanding of all the issues involved and not a gambler in ideas. He knew that the extent of his achievement must be conditioned by the degree of his powers and not to be left to the factors of accident and chance which may or may not yield results.

He accepted defeat with equanimity. People get tired of the most perfect or the most virtuous of men! In politics, as in sickness, a change often does one good! So the Greeks, tired of victory and war, turned to the peace offered by the exiled King. Venizelos, after ten years of office, was now going to have a rest among the trees and in the company of books. But he could not help feeling restless and unhappy over the results of his handiwork. In the hour of difficulty, his sole regret was having abandoned the conduct of foreign affairs to other hands; to men who did not know the difficulties he had to overcome in order to establish the claims of Greece in the Treaty of Sèvres; to men who did not feel about that treaty as he did. As a private person with no particular axe to grind, he intervened repeatedly during these months of stress, to warn, to advise, to cajole the Greek Government not to take any unnecessary risks. Had he been at the head of affairs he would have sacrificed part of his gains in order to save the remainder. He would not have committed the two grave political blunders of Gounares which alienated not only France, but British public opinion. Further, he would never have undertaken the offensive by occupying territories exclusively Turkish, and in consequence, there would not have been an Anatolian tragedy. The culminating tragedy was the result, not of Venizelos's work, but of the incompetence of his successors.

By this time the Gounares Government was impervious to advice. They had alienated world sympathy by their blatant

and undiplomatic dealings with the Powers and their organised atrocities against the Turks. They developed the illusion that the Turkish armies were a demoralised rabble and that Angora (the capital of Nationalist Turkey) was almost within their reach. There was some underlying motive in this policy of madness. Gounares hoped that by defeating the Turks and occupying Angora, even if peace did not follow instantly, the Powers would again be friendly and waive their objections to recognising the restoration of Constantine. He failed to understand the true character of the Turkish National movement and did not realise the far-reaching effects of the Moscow-Angora agreement of March 1921. Soviet Russia—once the Turks had accepted the boundaries of Soviet Armenia—was sympathetic to Turkey, whose struggle was one of national independence against the forces of Greek and British imperialism. Turkey had now established peace and friendship on the east and could concentrate all her forces on the west.

The Greek Government ordered the offensive on July 19. In a few days the Greek army had again seized Eski Shehr and Afion Kara-Hissar, as well as Kutahia. In Kutahia a Council of War was held, under the presidency of the King, which was attended by Gounares, Theotokes, General Papoulas, the Commander-in-Chief, Major-General Pallis, the Chief of the General Staff, Colonel Sariyanne and a few others. The two civilians Gounares and Theotokes insisted that the Turks should be pursued across the Sakkarria River, as the occupation of Angora was of capital political importance. With the "reluctant" consent of the King, the civilians over-rode the objections of the military authorities, who thought that the military frontier of Greece should be the Sakkarria River and that any venture beyond would be calamitous with the lengthening of their lines of communication and the conduct of operations in territories where the enemy knew every inch of the ground. The civilians prevailed, and at dawn on August 24, the Greeks resumed the attack across the river, with a heavy artillery bombardment.

The Turks resisted with desperate courage, and the Greeks attacked with equally reckless fury. Here and there a hill was taken, a dominating position was captured, a line was pierced,

but there was no break-through. On the southern flank some progress was made, but it was quickly checked. For fourteen consecutive days under the scorching August sun, with their lines of communication raided, and suffering from lack of food and water, the Greeks attacked and the Turks hung grimly on. Both sides threw in their reserves. Neither side had any appreciable superiority in men or equipment. Neither had any moral superiority, for both were filled with the hereditary venom of centuries. The casualties on both sides amounted to almost fifty per cent. of the effectives.

After a fortnight of slaughter, both sides had fought themselves to a standstill. It was the last agony but one of the religious wars which ravaged Europe and the Near East for a thousand years.

Neither was the victor. But while to the Turks anything short of complete annihilation was victory, to the Greeks anything short of complete victory and the crushing of Turkey was defeat. A Greek general retreat to the lines of Afion Karar-Hissar became necessary, and the whole month of September was taken up by the retreat, which was brilliantly carried out. Turkey had suffered, but was not subdued. Greece was exhausted, but could still hang on in Anatolia.

The battle of the Sakkaria River proved decisive. The final effort of Greece for victory, sustained with so much recklessness, melted away into a feeling of unrelievable gloom. The most competent of the officers were removed from their commands because of their Venizelist sympathies. Political dissensions destroyed the unity of the army. But due credit must be given to the Greek soldier. One must understand his difficulties, the conditions under which he had to fight. Most of them had been under arms for nearly ten years, and had been torn from their families and sent overseas for three years. As long as they were fighting for the liberation of Greeks, their courage did not fail them. Four centuries of accumulated hatred had produced results. But now they were asked to fight, not to liberate, but to enslave. They were not welcomed in the villages they occupied. The Turkish population was hostile. The men escaped to the hills to avoid senseless vengeance and returned stealthily to attack the lines of communication. Where was it all going to

end? Beyond Sakkaria lay Angora. But what was beyond that? Was it never going to be peace? For how long would they rot away in the trenches of Asia Minor far from their homes and families? The Government offered them no hope, because its policy had no goal. They were apprehensive, and the Sakkaria reverse strengthened the gnawing doubts. They felt deserted by the Great Powers, isolated, ill-provisioned and ill-equipped, stranded in an enemy country, and facing a foe who neither gave nor expected mercy!

When the King visited the front he was welcomed with the cry, "Peace," "Peace!" That is what they expected of the sovereign whose return had filled them temporarily with so much hope. Instead they had to pass through the bloodiest encounter they had yet faced, which cost as many casualties as the three previous years together. The Greek army became subject to disillusionment and gradually a prey to despair. They hung on in their position at Afion Kara-Hissar for almost a year, but their fighting spirit was gone, and the number of deserters increased alarmingly. When the final attack by Mustapha Kemal came in August 1922, their capacity for defence was almost gone. In a few weeks they were pushed to the coast, Smyrna, which had for so long been the bone of contention and for the possession of which so many men had died, was given over to the purification of flames.

* * *

The reverse of the Sakkaria River dashed the hopes of the Constantinist Government. They could no longer negotiate peace as victors. Once more Venizelos urged that they should attempt to negotiate even at a temporary disadvantage, but Gounares still pinned his faith to the good offices of the Lloyd George coalition to see him through.

During a brief sojourn at Nice in the early part of 1921, Venizelos met Miss Helena Schilizzi, a wealthy London-born Greek lady. He had made her acquaintance originally in 1913 when in London in connection with the Turko-Balkan Peace Treaty.

This friendship Miss Helena had strengthened by assisting

financially every philanthropic endeavour of Venizelos while Prime Minister of Greece. In his exile, she hurried to assure him that he should not worry about financial difficulties, as his supporters would be very glad to relieve him of those. To this offer he responded with a warm letter of thanks in which he begged her to confine her assistance to charitable matters, because any financial help to himself would make his position very difficult, and plunge him into debts which he could not easily pay back. Miss Helena insisted that any assistance given was intended to relieve him of financial anxiety, to allow him to devote his time more fully to the cause of his country.

A warm friendship gradually sprang up between them, and resulted in their marriage, which took place in London in December 1921. Soon afterwards they left for America. They returned from that country just before the Smyrna disaster.

The position of Greece meanwhile was sinking from bad to worse. In October 1921, France, alarmed at the cost in men and money of the war in Syria, sent M. Franklin-Bouillon to Angora to negotiate a treaty with Kemal. By this agreement, reached without the knowledge of the British Government, France bought peace by surrendering the whole stretch of the Baghdad railway between French Syria and Mesopotamia to Turkey in return for certain economic concessions. For the Turks this agreement meant that the Treaty of Sèvres was no longer considered as internationally binding. Lord Curzon, though angered by the secret Franco-Turkish bargain, preferred not to take isolated action with regard to Turkey to secure peace, and would do nothing except in conjunction with France and Italy. A month later (November 18, 1921) the Ambassadors' Conference awarded Northern Epirus to Albania in violation of the Treaty of Sèvres.

But the sequence of misfortunes was not ended. The Turks showed signs of renewed activity and began to harass the Greek lines. The Greek army, on the other hand, was in a state of dissolution. Military discipline had gone, enthusiasm had gone, there was a scarcity of provisions and lack of ammunition. On February 15, 1922, Gounares sent a letter to Lord Curzon to inform him of the disquieting state of the Greek army and to

indicate his intention of evacuating Asia Minor. Lord Curzon replied that he refused to believe that the Greek army was in such a bad state, and appealed to Greek patriotism not to fail at such a critical moment. Both Lord Curzon and Mr. Lloyd George were contemplating the possibility of joint Allied action in order to prevent a decisive reversal in Asia Minor, but M. Poincaré, whose leanings were on the side of the Angora Government, defeated their intention.

With the gathering storm of disaster facing Greece, Gounares lost his nerve. He did not attempt to utilise the still remaining assets guaranteed to Greece by the treaty. He abandoned all Greek interests vested in the Treaty of Sèvres, and gave up all claims to the balance of credits guaranteed to Greece by the Allies for the doubtful advantage of being allowed to raise a loan in London. At home he reconstituted the League of Reservists as a secret organisation to combat Venizelism. While he had the courage to tell Lord Curzon of the pitiful position of the Greek army, he withheld all such information from the Greek public. On January 18, 1922, the Æcumenical Patriarch-elect, Meletios Metaxakes (a Venizelist ex-Archbishop of Athens and afterwards exile in America) passing through London on his way to Constantinople, had a long interview with Lloyd George, during which he was definitely told that, with Constantine on the throne, Greece could not expect to retain Smyrna. Gounares forbade any mention of the interview in the Press. He himself disclaimed any knowledge of it, although a copy was found among his papers after his arrest. The editor of the Venizelist paper *Eleutherios Typos* had the courage to publish a summary of the interview, and was at once set upon and murdered by members of the secret Royalist organisation. A number of journalists and deputies who dared to criticise the Government, in a manifesto intended for publication, were arrested and thrown into prison.

Perplexed and nerve-wracked, the Royalists were perpetrating one blunder after another. There was disunity in their camp, but all were united against the Venizelists. Governments were formed only to fall in such rapid succession as to augment the state of bewildering crisis. Papoulas, the Commander-in-Chief,

a capable and energetic staff officer, was forced to resign and General Hadjianestes, once a good soldier, but now mentally unbalanced and given to hallucinations, whose sole asset was that he was a courtier, was given command of the army. The new commander made up his mind to wipe off Asia Minor as a bad debt and concentrate on holding the frontier of Thrace. He ignored the fact that a few weeks previously the Allied Conference at Paris (Lord Curzon, M. Poincaré and Sig. Schanzer) awarded not only Smyrna, but Eastern Thrace, up to Rodosto, to Turkey and that the offer had fallen through because Turkey insisted on the immediate evacuation of Asia Minor. The loss of Smyrna meant equally the loss of Eastern Thrace. The idea behind the general's plan for the execution of which he withdrew 25,000 men from the Anatolian front for Thrace, was to occupy Constantinople and force Turkey to conclude peace.

The occupation of Constantinople was indeed the only avenue of safety left open for Greece. Under cover of that occupation, the evacuation of Smyrna could be effected painlessly and without running the attendant risks of defeat. But the Commander-in-Chief adopted this measure without knowing in advance whether the Powers actually in occupation of Constantinople would permit him to enter. He deliberately weakened his sorely tried Anatolian front. It was the gambler's last throw. When, early in August, an actual request was made to the Powers to allow the Greek army to occupy Constantinople, the Powers refused bluntly, and France intimated that she would oppose Greek military action, if necessary by force. Thus the last remaining path for concluding peace was definitely barred. The Powers had refused to help Greece, but during this hour of danger at least they should not have opposed her. Mr. Lloyd George, defending his Government against charges of philhellenism, said in the House of Commons that the Allied occupation of Constantinople was actually preventing the Greeks from bringing the war to a victorious conclusion by seizing the enemy's capital.

Mustapha Kemal had waited patiently for a year. His army was drilled and trained into a disciplined fighting force and was well equipped with French arms and aeroplanes. The discovery that the Greek front had been materially weakened determined

him to risk for the first time an offensive movement. He did not realise how low the morale of the Greek troops had fallen. He knew that he was facing a numerically inferior enemy, but did not know how far stagnation and the ineptitude of military commanders had sapped the strength of that army which had so favourably impressed foreign military attachés during the campaign of the previous year. On August 26, Kemal attacked the key position of Afion Kara-Hissar. The following day the Greek lines were decisively pierced and cut in two. The northern section, after a skilful retreat, embarked almost intact at the Sea of Marmora for Greece, while the southern sector broke and ran. Soon the defeat developed into a wild stampede. So quickly had the Greeks fled that the pursuing Turkish cavalry lost complete contact with them. Masses of refugees flocked to Smyrna along with the fleeing army. A few able officers managed to evacuate the bulk of the army to the adjoining islands, and on September 9, Kemal rode triumphantly into Smyrna. The occupation was completed—incendiaryism followed, and Smyrna became a bonfire to celebrate the hard-won victory!

The Government in Athens was horror-stricken and stu^ggered by the calamity. In the space of one week they had lost what had taken them three years to conquer. Instead of proceeding to hold the lines of Thrace with the troops still at their disposal the Government issued an order for general demobilisation, thus leaving the country unprotected in order to stave off revolution and save the dynasty.

A Revolutionary Committee, however, had meanwhile been formed by Colonel Plasteras, who fought his way gallantly at the head of his troops and landed on September 7 in the island of Chios, along with Colonel Gonatas, who rallied his troops in Mitylene, and Captain Phocas¹ of the battleship *Lemnos*, with the object of overthrowing the Government and defending the Thracian frontier. On the 26th, an ultimatum was sent to Athens calling for the abdication of the King and on the following day 20,000 troops were landed in Lavrion ready to occupy the capital. The King abdicated in favour of his son and fled.

¹ Both Gonatas and Phocas were Royalist officers. They turned against the King after the catastrophe in Asia Minor.

The Revolutionary Committee declared that it was determined to defend the Greeks of Thrace to the end and took Draconian measures to re-equip the army and dispatch reinforcements to that province. By a telegram to Venizelos the Revolutionary Committee placed the foreign policy of his country in his hands. Once again, in the hour of need, the country turned to him.

CHAPTER XII

SALVING THE WRECKAGE

ONCE more the fate of Greece was decided by the councils of Europe. M. Poincaré accepted the premises of the Franklin-Bouillon agreement and defended them with the passion of a proselyte. He ordered the French troops to withdraw from the Asiatic side of the Straits to Gallipoli, and refused to take joint action with Britain to keep Kemal out of Europe. The *entente* appeared to have come to an end, but last-minute intervention by Lord Curzon in Paris produced an agreement, which was, in fact, the acceptance of the views of the Quai d'Orsay, intended to restore to Turkey Eastern Thrace up to the Maritza. The terms of the agreement were communicated to the Turkish Nationalists, who finally accepted them on September 29, and four days later General Harrington, accompanied by his French and Italian colleagues, met Ismet Pasha at Mudania, where negotiations for an armistice began.

Venizelos, called upon to save the wreckage, found public opinion, both in England and France, against him. The Quai d'Orsay cold-shouldered him and Lord Curzon told him plainly, but civilly, of the irrevocable decision of Britain and France to surrender Eastern Thrace to Turkey. The right wing Press greeted Venizelos's arrival in London with a vehement tirade of denunciation. He was hailed as a "fiend" and "war-monger." In a letter to *The Times* on October 4, 1922, he sought to answer his critics and enumerated the Greek case against the immediate restoration of Turkish sovereignty in Eastern Thrace. ". . . Surely public opinion will not allow the Government of this country to share the responsibility of such destruction in imposing on Greece the immediate evacuation of Eastern Thrace and its transference to Turkish administration and Turkish police. . . . Since the beginning of the war, Turkey has destroyed in Asia Minor between a million and a half to two million Greeks and Armenians. Surely our former Allies are in duty bound to help

in averting the extermination of yet another million upon the soil of Europe itself. If it is necessary to give further guarantees that the promise concerning the return of Eastern Thrace will meet with no obstacle in its execution, this province could, as a last resource, be occupied by Allied troops until the execution of the treaty. . . . In this manner, either the Christian population would be guaranteed by the treaty of peace or, should Turkey insist on the evacuation, the Powers would be able to ensure orderly evacuation before the Turkish occupation began. Can it really be said with honesty that I am asking too much or that I came here as a fiend and war-monger?" But the storm was not quelled. The *Daily Mail* came out with a violent editorial the following day in which Venizelos was accused of attempting "to inveigle Great Britain into his 'Holy War' in support of a feeble people against a more virile race."

The ravings of the jingo Press were, unfortunately, a reflection of official policy. Lloyd George was still in power and his sympathies were still on the side of the Greeks, but the concentrated attacks of the Press upon him brought about the defection of the Conservative Party from the coalition and ended his power. In vain Venizelos attempted to secure an understanding by which a breathing space could be gained for Greece to re-organise. He pleaded that Turkish sovereignty should not be restored without due guarantees to the Greek citizens. He appealed to America for assistance, but nobody was willing to help. He had to bow to the inevitable. He suggested, and the Revolutionary Committee consented after great difficulty and with many arguments, the acceptance of the stipulations of the *entente*, and on October 11 the Armistice of Mudania was signed, providing for the withdrawal of the Greek forces from Eastern Thrace under supervision of the Allied Missions, the latter to remain in occupation for thirty more days after the evacuation was completed in order to allow those of the population who desired to escape to do so.

With a heavy heart, and conscious of entire isolation, Venizelos made the journey to Lausanne for the opening of the Conference (November 20, 1922) which culminated in the treaty of peace signed on July 24, 1923. For eight months the two Greek

delegates—Venizelos and M. Caclamanos—opposed by practically everyone and supported only half-heartedly by the British delegates, battled unremittingly against the intractable Turkish delegation, led by Ismet Pasha. This is how M. Caclamanos describes the first appearance of Venizelos to the assembly of delegates: "A deep, breathless silence pervaded the hall. Everyone was eager to hear the great victim of the tragedy. He was indeed superb. He related the reasons for his policy. He explained how great ideals of liberty, noble national sentiments, the duty of safeguarding the two million Greeks whom Liman von Sanders, representing grim Prussian violence, had advised the Turks as early as 1913 to throw into the sea, had inspired that policy. Destiny decreed otherwise. Greece accepted its verdict. But he could afford to hold his head high. Greece was not brought to Asia Minor and the Hellespont by territorial greed or a desire for the appropriation of other nations' property. She was brought to territories essentially Greek by a sense of duty to the call of blood and the cry of history. After Venizelos sat down nobody was in a mood to hear anything any longer on that day and the sitting was suspended."¹

One of the most astounding decisions of the Treaty of Lausanne was that of the transference of populations. Kemal's policy—in this respect the precursor of Hitlerism—was the expulsion or even extermination of all foreign elements, particularly the Greeks and Armenians from Turkish territory, and the creation of a homogeneous Turkish State. When the Conference tackled this problem there were already over a million refugees roaming homeless and hungry in the towns and villages of Greece. The act of repatriation having been forcibly accomplished, the Conference was only called upon to condone it by legalisation. Several times the Greek delegate M. Caclamanos suggested that he would waive any idea of an exchange of populations if Turkey was willing to accept back those who had fled. Lord Curzon's pleas with Ismet Pasha were unavailing, and on January 30 the famous Greco-Turkish Convention for the exchange of populations was signed. The Convention stipulated that as from May 1, 1923, a compulsory exchange of the Greek population in

¹ D. Caclamanos, *Venizelos*, pp. 29–30.

Turkey for the Moslem population in Greece was to be effected. The only exceptions were to be the Greeks resident in Constantinople before November 1918, the Moslems of Western Thrace, and those of Albanian race, the latter mostly inhabiting Epirus.

Shortly afterwards the Conference split up over the question of the status of foreigners in Crete.

* * *

On September 27, 1922, several ex-ministers and the Commander-in-Chief Hadjianestes were arrested in Athens, and a Special Commission of Inquiry was appointed by the Revolutionary Committee to ascertain the responsibility for the disasters. In its report on November 6, the Commission found the prisoners guilty of negligence and several crimes which directly or indirectly led to the Anatolian tragedy. On the basis of that report an indictment was served and the accused appeared before a specially instituted Revolutionary Tribunal on November 13. The accused were allowed full facilities for defence and were even granted the right to challenge the composition of the court-martial. They exercised their option and demanded the replacement of four of the judges, who were instantly replaced. After fourteen days of trial, the accused were found guilty of restoring the King in spite of the warning of the Powers; of concealing the note of December 8 by which Greece was warned that she was deserted by her allies and that credits were cut off, "and so enforced upon the Greek people a task beyond its capacity to sustain, aware of the dangers besetting national interests"; of removing efficient officers from the army command and persisting in the war after the failure of Sakkaria, when it was evident that the imposition of the treaty by force of arms became impossible; of shielding the King when his presence on the throne was detrimental to national interests and for prolonging the campaign in Asia Minor for dynastic reasons which led to the demoralisation of the army and the financial exhaustion of the nation, and resulted in the Anatolian disaster; of deliberately weakening the army in Asia Minor by the transference of troops to Thrace in order to bring about a military defeat and thus justify the

evacuation of Asia Minor. The Commander-in-Chief was further found guilty of being directly responsible for the defeat by his incompetence and his failure to reform the army and attempt to stop the enemy.

At 6 a.m. on November 28, the Court unanimously found all the accused guilty, with extenuating circumstances for the lesser two, Goudas and Strategos. Five ex-ministers, Gounares, Stratos, Prodopapadakes, N. Theotokes, G. Baltazzi and the Commander-in-Chief Hadjianestes were sentenced to death and executed almost immediately.

Venizelos's critics sought to make capital out of the execution of the six. They accused him of deliberately engineering "a legal murder" in order to get rid of his opponents and have his belated revenge for the electoral defeat. The accused, if one makes due allowance for a state in the turmoil of defeat and the throes of revolution, were fairly tried, and justly condemned. No one reading the bulky proceedings of the trial will consider the verdict unfair in face of such devastating evidence of incompetence, distortion, suppression, lies and the deliberate organisation of defeat. Venizelos scrupulously refrained from intervening in a question which he considered a matter of local justice. It was his decision never to mix in Greek politics and he only accepted to serve as the Greek representative at the Conference on condition that after peace was signed, he would be relieved of his official duties. To the writer he explained the reasons for his abstention on the grounds that he desired not to give the impression to the Revolutionary Committee that he had any intention of mixing in internal affairs and thus indirectly necessitating and justifying his recall to assume control and straighten out the situation; and, furthermore, that he did not anticipate that the death sentences would be either imposed or carried out. Yet when the latter became evident, Venizelos, yielding to the persuasion of Lord Curzon, telegraphed to Athens from Lausanne advising against the executions, as they would have unfavourable international consequences. But his telegram arrived too late—a few hours after the executions were carried out. All responsibility—if it can be called responsibility—for the carrying out of the execution rests with King George the II. As Constitutional

Monarch he was ultimately responsible for signing the death sentences. If indeed he wanted to save his father's ministers, he ought to have refused his signature, or, if challenged on that point, he ought to have had the moral courage to abdicate. Prodopapadakes's brother and other relatives of the executed men laid the blame for the execution at the feet of the King, thirteen years later, when the restoration of King George the II was being debated in the Greek Chamber.

The only international repercussion which the executions had—apart from the virtuous expressions of disgust by the European dailies—was the withdrawal of the British Minister from Athens from a sense of outraged justice and the leaving of the Legation in the hands of a chargé d'affaires for fifteen months.

While this drama excited more interest among the sensation-mongers than the burning of Smyrna and its “quarter million dead and the million and a half homeless refugees,” the vital issues of war or peace were still to be decided at Lausanne. The crucial point arrived during the second session of the Conference. Here is how M. Caclamanos describes the proceedings:—

“The Turks were pressing with greater insistence upon payment of compensation by Greece for damages, real or imaginary, undoubtedly exaggerated, which they alleged to have suffered in Asia Minor. They claimed no less a sum than £100,000,000. But Greece was now in a better position. Her army was re-organised and concentrated on the Maritsa, and the English delegation was as well aware of this as Venizelos. On the other hand, we learnt confidentially that Ismet Pasha was inspired by more conciliatory ideas than those of Angora, or of his colleagues on the spot, and particularly of the notorious Dr. Nour Bey. One morning Venizelos delegated to me the task of arranging an interview with Ismet Pasha, whom he wished to see as quickly as possible, at the Palace Hotel where the Turkish delegation was housed. . . . The news of the interview came like a bombshell to the Conference, which had arrived at an impasse and ceased to meet. Everyone felt that a new lead had been given, and that the decision of peace or war was in the hands of these two men—particularly in the hands of Ismet.

“In the private apartments of the Turkish Premier an hour’s

discussion took place without witnesses. Returning to his hotel, Venizelos summarised the interview in a few striking words. 'I told Ismet plainly that any insistence upon the payment of compensation means war. I left him pondering and apprehensive. I think I succeeded in shaking him.' Almost immediately, a foreign diplomat, clever and courageous, the Serbian Minister, M. Yovanovich, an admirer of Venizelos, visited Ismet to tell him that if hostilities were resumed the Turkish army would not only have to face Greek but also Serbian bayonets.

"'Are you instructed by your Government to make this declaration?' asked Ismet.

"'Yes,' replied Yovanovich.

"It is by no means certain that his instructions were either so wide or so categorical, but he rendered Greece a personal and immense service, because it was a service for peace. On the following day Ismet returned the visit to Venizelos, and their conversation lasted for another hour. . . . After two or three days, on the initiative of General Pellé in agreement with Sir Horace Rumbold, Venizelos and Ismet, it was decided to convene the Conference again, but restricting it only to the leaders of the delegations. In the so-called Bridal Suite of the Hotel Château d'Ouchy there assembled Pellé, Rumbold, Venizelos, Ismet, Montagna of Italy, Diamandy of Rumania and Yovanovich of Serbia. Instructions were given that they were under no circumstances to be disturbed by anyone.

"The drama which was unfolded on the top floor . . . lasted for three hours, while three hundred journalists besieged the hotel awaiting the final verdict. Peace was meanwhile in mortal danger. M. Poincaré, in one of his less happy but characteristic moments, telegraphed to M. Pellé asking him to inform the Conference that he had proposed to the two Great Powers (Great Britain and Italy) that no resumption of hostilities was to be permitted, and that if the Greek fleet should attempt to enter the Dardanelles, it would be confronted by the three European fleets. The French Prime Minister mentioned the fleet specifically, because Constantinople was still occupied by the Allied armies, and as there were no Turkish troops there, a clash was impossible. M. Pellé, though a general, revealed him-

self to be a diplomat, indeed a greater diplomat than his master, for he realised the magnitude of the blunder. He buried the telegram in his pocket without communicating its contents to anyone, while England was holding up her answer to the French request. Even this would have proved inadequate had instructions not been given that no one was to ascend to the upper storey of the hotel while the leaders of the delegations were in conference. I say that it would have proved inadequate, because while the Conference was still in session, the last edition of the Paris *Temps*. containing the proposition of M. Poincaré was being sold in the streets. Had this been known before the Conference ended, the unfortunate and conciliatory Ismet would have yielded to the pressure of the irreconcilables round him. Nour Bey would have triumphed.

"At about 6 p.m., emerging first with big strides, and beaming with joy, Venizelos said to the waiting journalists—'Messieurs! C'est la Paix!'¹

M. Caclamanos had meanwhile prepared the documents for the denunciation of the Treaty of Mudania in the event of the Conference ending in a deadlock. Fortunately, the famous formula of Venizelos that "Greece recognises her obligation to make reparation for the damage caused in Anatolia by the acts of the Greek army or administration which were contrary to the laws of war, and that on the other hand Turkey, in consideration of the financial situation of Greece resulting from the prolongation of the war and from its consequences, finally renounces all claims for reparations against the Greek Government" had been accepted and war was averted. At last the basis of lasting peace between Greece and Turkey was established through the hard but necessary method of exchanging populations. The cause which had forced Venizelos to Asia Minor had disappeared, and with it the underlying motives of enmity. The Treaty of Lausanne put an end to religious war in Europe and the Near East. There cannot in future be any necessity for invoking the battle-cry of Christianity against Islam, which, though it embodied at times noble ideals of liberty, was also sometimes a good cover for economic encroachments and imperialist adventures. The

¹ D Caclamanos, *Eleutherios Venizelos*, pp. 35-41.

"Eastern Question" which had baffled the politicians of Europe for the last two centuries was at last finally solved. Turkey was victorious, but poorer as a result of the war, and Greece, in defeat, had to struggle with fifteen hundred thousand refugees in need of food and shelter. But both nations ceased to represent a danger to one another and were no longer divided by unbridgeable differences.

But the custom of centuries could not be easily overcome. Greece and Turkey continued to be, for the next six years, poles apart. Press, polemics, diplomatic collusions, and petty annoyances continued to supply the fuel of hostility. But they were artificial, devoid of substance, the last flickers of a hard-dying hate. Venizelos in his last but one premiership, succeeded in putting an end to these "traditional" outbursts, and in establishing between Greece and Turkey, not only peace, but friendship.

* * *

The day after the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne, Venizelos received a telegram of thanks from the King, in which he was also asked to return to Greece and work for the country's good. In answering, he used the opportunity to tell the Greek people why he refused the persistent invitations to return to Greece. The country was in need of peace, he explained. He had had enough of civil strife. His return would neither facilitate nor promote peace, but exacerbate dissension. He was ready, however, to serve Greece whenever possible abroad, and reiterated his decision that the elections of 1920 put an end to his political career.

The Revolutionary Government, headed by democrats of the calibre and integrity of Colonel Plasteras and Colonel Gonatas had, with the reorganisation of the army and the holding of the Thracian frontier, made some genuine attempts to return to constitutional Government. They hoped to hold elections after the conclusion of peace, but the Corfu crisis radically interfered with their projects. On August 26, 1923, General Tellini and his staff were murdered within Greek territory while engaged in delimiting the Greco-Albanian frontier. The murderers, who ever they were, must have had adequate means of escape and

MAP OF TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT
OF GREECE



Indication of Successive Frontiers of Greece.

- - - - In 1832 after the recognition of Greek Independence
- - - - In 1864 after the cession of the Ionian Islands to Greece by Great Britain.
- - - - In 1881 after the annexation of Thessaly.
- - - - In 1913 after the two Balkan Wars and the Treaty of Bucharest
- - - - In 1920 after the abortive Treaty of Sèvres
- — — — In 1923 after the disaster in Asia Minor and the Treaty of Lausanne.

protection, as the endeavours of both the Greek and Albanian Governments failed to find the slightest clue as to their identity and motives. It is true that General Tellini was accused in the Greek Press of deliberately favouring Albanian as against Greek claims. It is also equally true that the Italian Premier-dictator throughout the summer of 1923 was having considerable difficulties with the dissentient Fascists and much trouble over his new Electoral Reform Bill and over his unfavourable negotiations with Yugoslavia. Something of a spectacular foreign move was needed to extricate him from those difficulties, daily becoming worse. The murder of Tellini was like a *deus ex-machina*. Whoever engineered the murders must have had an eye on the internal Italian crisis and the fact that Mussolini made the maximum possible use of them to stabilise and strengthen his régime, cannot entirely block out the consideration that the Fascist divinities in Rome had something to do with them. Signor Mussolini at once presented a note (in the form of an ultimatum) to Greece demanding ample apologies and an indemnity of half a million pounds to be paid within five days. Greek complicity was thus provocatively assumed when there was not, as yet, the slightest shred of evidence to that effect. Why did not Mussolini wait until the enquiry instituted by the Greek Government was complete, and why did he not assist the efforts of the two Governments in locating the culprits in view of the fact that the murders were committed only about a thousand yards inside the Greek frontier, which was not yet delimited? Why all this haste to exact apologies and indemnities? Was he in any doubt about the results of an impartial inquiry? And why were the reports of the League of Nations' Commission of Inquiry on the murders never published?

The Greek Government accepted some of the demands contained in the Italian Note, and rejected others, including the demand for indemnity, but promised just and adequate reparation to the families of the victims. At the same time, the Greek Government asked the Council of Ambassadors for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, whose findings they would accept. Signor Mussolini rejected contemptuously the Greek reply as unsatisfactory and ordered the immediate occupation of

Corfu. With characteristic Fascist brutality, the Italians opened fire without warning on the Citadel, in spite of the fact that they had received a communication from the Greek Commandant to the effect that the Citadel was dismantled and was used for the housing of Greek and Armenian refugees. Sixteen children and four adults were killed by the Fascist shells. There were in all one hundred casualties. Italian landing parties followed up the bombardment, and in a series of rushes proceeded to storm the ungarrisoned Citadel, where instead of defending troops, they found the mangled bodies of children and met with cries of agony from the wounded and dying!

A wave of indignation swept over Europe. The world was receiving a foretaste of the horrors which the philosophy of violence, permeating the political doctrine of Fascism, augured for the future. Such was the outcry of public opinion that Mussolini found it disadvantageous to flout it. Neither Britain nor France were prepared to allow an Italian occupation of Corfu, and M. Poincaré associated himself momentarily with Britain in demanding the Italian evacuation of the island. The French Prime Minister, afraid however lest France would be the next to be condemned by the British Government, who had recently asserted the illegality of the Ruhr occupation, managed to get the issue transferred from the hands of the League to the Conference of the Ambassadors. The appointed Commission of Inquiry, given only five days in which to inquire, reported on September 22. The British, French and Japanese Commissioners satisfied themselves that the Greek Government had done all in their power to facilitate the search for the murderers and that there was not the slightest evidence for deducing any complicity of Greek officials in the crime, but that there were many cases of negligence. The Italian Commissioner, for political reasons, did not associate himself with his colleagues. On the strength of the Commission's report, Mussolini was persuaded to evacuate Corfu, but not before he had ascertained that £500,000 was to be paid by Greece. He instructed the Italian Ambassador to carry off the £500,000 deposited by Greece in a Swiss Bank (the Commission had meanwhile decided, under pressure from France, in order to placate Italy, that as several instances of negligence

had been reported, Greece, by way of penalty, should pay the £500,000). Failing this, Italy threatened to retain Corfu. Vainly Venizelos attempted to influence the Quai d'Orsay against rewarding Italian piracy. M. Poincaré was determined to maintain his friendship with Mussolini and equally determined to get him out of Corfu, but without troubling how and at whose expense this had to be carried out. Greece paid the fine, Italy evacuated Corfu, and the gangster got his ransom money to the indignation of world public opinion.

* * *

All the attempts of the Revolutionary Government to persuade M. Zaimis to assume the leadership of the Centre Party, uniting moderates of the Royalist and Venizelist camp, failed. The nation was divided as never before, and the feud between Republicans and Royalists was stronger than ever. There were rumours of impending coups from either side; there were beatings up and shootings of opponents, accompanied by violent and immoral journalistic warfare. Towards the end of October—hardly a month after the settlement of the Corfu incident—the extreme Royalists, under General Metaxas, attempted a counter-revolution, with the connivance and clandestine support of King George II. The revolution was easily suppressed and the gallant general—the future dictator—escaped abroad in a steamer carrying a cargo of cod-fish. In consequence, the Republicans were strengthened enormously.

The Venizelists, occupying a middle position between the extreme Royalists and the extreme Republicans, were repeatedly urging their exiled leader to return and, by assuming the leadership of his party, and the leadership of the Government, save the constitutional liberties of the people. A similar request was sent from a gigantic meeting of his supporters on December 2, to which Venizelos replied three days later that after having given the question due consideration, he decided to abide by his former decision. "I regret to announce that the result of my deliberation is in the negative. The country stands in absolute need of a definite cessation of civil strife and of the restoration of internal peace under conditions guaranteeing the normal operation of

free institutions. Unfortunately, a large political section of the nation entertains towards me a feeling of deep repulsion, and many do not forgive, not so much the faults I may have committed as the great achievements realised by the nation under my guidance. Under these circumstances, my return to political life would exacerbate rather than appease the existing differences.

"I have also considered whether I could not return temporarily in order to bring about an understanding between conflicting parties, so that the participation of all in the coming elections might be possible. And for a moment I inclined towards the solution. But I was obliged with great regret to reject this also. For the deep distrust I inspire in the minds of the opposite political party makes me least of all suitable to act as a peace-maker and conciliator." This letter—ludicrous as it sounds—produced a storm among the Royalists, who were never tired of using any flimsy excuse to keep up the tempo of civil antagonism. As a protest against Venizelos's interference they abstained from the elections (December 16) in which two hundred Venizelists were elected, along with one hundred and twenty Republicans and six Agrarians. The Republicans, though not the strongest party, but having the unanimous support of the army and navy, requested that the King should absent himself while the National Assembly was debating the future of the throne. The Government complied in order to avoid disorder, and on December 18 the King, with a gift of £10,000 in his pocket, left on unspecified leave of absence, and Admiral Countouriotis became Regent once more. The situation was indeed ugly. The Venizelists feared a possible coup both from the Royalists and the Republicans, while they themselves were undecided over the question, for or against the Monarchy.

As the Greek political situation grew worse, the requests urging Venizelos to return increased. He was inundated with letters and telegrams, all of them telling the same story that the state of dangerous flux could only be checked by his quick and energetic intervention. Once more the nation looked up to him. Even Royalists joined in the general appeal for his return. A delegation representing every party of the Assembly left for Paris to acquaint him with the exact position and press for him to

yield to the national call. So great and so insistent was the demand that at last, on December 25, he notified Colonel Plasteras that he decided to return to Greece temporarily to help to solve the political crisis. One of the principal reasons which prompted him to reverse his former decision and accept the extended invitation was the unquestionable interference of the army in politics. The Republicans made no secret that they intended not to rely on the ballot to enforce the issue of the abolition of the Monarchy, but based their hopes chiefly on the ascendancy of the military in politics. Instead of Republic there would be stratocracy. The failure to strengthen the constitutional administration left Greece a breeding ground for military dictatorships. Ambitious generals, disgruntled colonels, captains of all sorts and politicians distrusting each other, wanted to rule. For four years (1924-1928) Greece was a land of transitory dictatorships, of *coup d'états*, of abortive *putsches* and rebellions. By the end of this period, Greece had more generals than pieces of cannon, more admirals than warships, generals pensioners at the age of thirty-five, captains made colonels by a stroke of the pen, and so forth, until nobody knew who was with whom, what army unit was loyal and what not, from where would spring the new *coup d'état* and with what object in view. Venizelos knew from past experience all the vices of army rule. Under the alluring name of democracy—the establishment of a Republic—the Military League reconstituted itself. It was by no means so homogeneous and united in purpose as of old.

During his voyage from Marseilles to Piræus Venizelos defined his programme by wireless. The question of the Monarchy could only be solved by a free vote of the people, and he proposed to hold a plebiscite as soon as possible after his return for or against, with two specific demands: (1) Do you wish Greece to remain a Monarchy or to become a Republic; (2) If you want Greece to remain a Monarchy, do you desire the maintenance of the present dynasty or the election of a new one? He suggested that at least 70 per cent. of the electorate should register against the monarchy before such a radical change could be considered justified and as enjoying the nation's overwhelming approval.

What could have been more democratic than that, and what

other alternative possibility was there to exorcise the prospect of military dictatorships? But the suggestion angered General Pangalos and Admiral Hadjikyriakos, the two most prominent supporters of M. Papanastassiou's Republicans, and infuriated the Royalists, who, on the day of his arrival in Athens, published photographs of the executed ministers in their papers saying that "he" (implying the murderer) has come back to finish off his work with the banishment of the King. The Revolutionary Committee declared that it had fulfilled its mission and would relinquish its authority to any stable Government resulting from the return to Greece of "the greatest of the Hellenes."

As Venizelos had foreshadowed, his return produced the opposite result from what was popularly expected of it. The National Assembly, amidst scenes of great enthusiasm, elected him president, but no sign of national reconciliation was in view. The Royalists remained irreconcilable as always and the Liberals were split, and neither the Right nor the Left wing leaders of the Liberal Party would serve under the other. At last, Venizelos unwillingly consented to form a ministry and extricate the country from the parliamentary impasse. England, with Venizelos back as Prime Minister, resumed full diplomatic relations with Greece. On January 19, Venizelos declared in the Assembly that the definite policy of his Government over the crucial question of the monarchy was that the people "should have a free and unbiased voice over this great issue." He himself favoured a Republic, but it was for the people to decide what their form of Government was to be. Bitter opposition came this time, not from the Right, but from the Left, from the extreme Republicans of M. Papanastassiou, backed by the reactionary officers.

Prolonged and arduous discussions followed the Government's declaration of policy. The Republicans demanded the instant promulgation of the Republic by Government decree, to be subsequently confirmed by a plebiscite. Venizelos defended his policy with vigour, maintaining that it was for the people to decide first, before any change was undertaken, and that he had no time for the Bonapartist type of plebiscites which asked for the confirmation of *faits accomplis*. He painted a dark prophetic

picture of what was to be the outcome if the Government was stampeded into action at the behest of adventuresome elements without the people deciding in advance. Greece would then be left a prey to cliques and conspiracies. He was not listened to. The Officers' League found Venizelos's moderate Liberalism intolerable. M. Papanastassiou, an upright democrat, was particularly vehement in his criticisms. Acting from pure motives, and conscious of the misfortunes heaped on his unlucky country by the Glucksburg dynasty, he wanted a Republic by an Act of Parliament. But he was oblivious of the dangers looming ahead. Would he be able to control the officers who so ardently demanded a Republic from taking power into their own hands? Could he ensure parliamentary administration with autocratic generals meddling in affairs?

Twice, under the stress of the conflict, Venizelos collapsed in the Assembly. His constitution could no longer stand the strain, and on February 4, 1924, acting on medical advice, he resigned. His successor, M. Caphandares, defended Venizelos's policy with equal vigour, admitting the desirability of a Republic, but only after a plebiscite. On February 25, M. Papanastassiou's motion for the immediate deposition of the dynasty was defeated. Five days later, the Officers' League—the dissolution of which was one of the conditions for the return of Venizelos—waited upon the Regent and informed him that the army demanded the instant deposition of the absent King. The Government was determined to uphold its authority as against military interference, but the nature of the officers' ultimatum and the unequivocal declaration of the Republicans that they would resort to civil war rather than abide by the result of the plebiscite if the maintenance of the King on the throne was endorsed, and the equally emphatic insistence of the Royalists for the recall of the King before the plebiscite took place, left M. Caphandares with no other alternative than to resign. M. Papanastassiou then formed a Government and proposed to settle the fate of the throne in accordance with his expressed policy, by an Act of Parliament, to be ratified by a subsequent plebiscite.

Venizelos, having despaired of his endeavours to bring understanding among the conflicting political parties, left Greece. In

a letter to the Premier he expressed his profound disillusionment and the mistake he had made in hoping that he would be able to bring appeasement. He could see that his policy was distrusted by a large number in the Assembly, who based their ultimate appeal to the power of the sword. Since he could not acquiesce in the destruction of his policy, nothing remained for him but to leave Greece once more. His disappearance from the scene of conflict might help the country to find its way to salvation.

On March 10, 1924, he embarked at Piraeus for his voluntary exile. A broken-hearted, ill and disillusioned man, with faded hopes of national greatness, leaving behind him a trail of angry passions and firmly resolved never to take part in politics again.

PART IV

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CHAPTER XIII

PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP

“Since then it is your fixed resolution to pursue a just policy, you must look that you have the means to carry it out. Such means you will possess if you are supposed to be the common protectors of Grecian liberty. It is, doubtless, very difficult for you to adopt proper measures. The rest of mankind have one battle to fight, namely, against their avowed enemies: if they conquer those, nothing hinders them accomplishing their desires. You, Athenians, have a double contest; that which the rest have, and also another, prior to that, and more arduous: for you must in council overcome a faction who act among you in systematic opposition to the State.”

—Demosthenes.

“Love thou thy land, with love far-brought
From out the storied Past, and used
Within the Present, but transfused
Thro’ future time by power of thought.”

—Tennyson.

vows are generally made to be broken. Nobody appears to be able to escape that maxim. So it was with Venizelos. He declared categorically that he had withdrawn from politics for ever, and in four years time he was back again, Prime Minister of Greece.

He was a man born for the rough and tumble of politics, and could not find comfort in the reading of the classics and the translation of Thucydides to which he devoted his labours in his second exile. It was not until March 20, 1927, that he returned to Greece, but he sailed straight for Crete and refused to see anyone while the ship was anchored in Piraeus. He wanted to withdraw to his old house to enjoy once more the peace and quiet of his beloved country.

Once home, he actively superintended the modernisation of

his house, anxious to have it ready to welcome his wife, who had remained behind in Paris. During the period of waiting, he took long walks in the country or visited places associated with his past struggles, and everywhere he appeared he was the object of friendly demonstrations. One day, with a friend, he visited the historic Therisso, where twenty-two years earlier he had raised the standard of revolt against Prince George. On their return they came across a number of workmen opening a road on the brow of the rocky mountain, leading up to Therisso. As they approached they heard twenty-one consecutive charges blasting the mountain rocks. It was the twenty-one rounds of artillery with which the Cretan "dynamiteros" saluted the arrival of their leader.

Early in autumn Madame Venizelos visited the home of her husband for the first time. They both made a tour of the island and she saw the love and devotion which the Cretan people felt towards her husband and shared in his glory. She delighted in these exhibitions, exaggerated as they sometimes were, and they increased her desire to see Venizelos once more in politics and Prime Minister of Greece.

* * *

During his three years of absence from Greece, Venizelos only once took part in Greek affairs, and then indirectly, when he consented to assist his friend M. Caclamanos and M. Tsouderos in negotiations in London for the settlement of Anglo-Greek war debts.

Greece was meanwhile adjusting herself with difficulty to the Republican régime. M. Papanastassiou became the first Republican Premier with a markedly military element, General Kondyles, General Pangalos and Admiral Hadjikyriakos, in the Cabinet. The Republic was unanimously proclaimed in the Assembly, in the absence of M. Caphandares and his supporters, by 284 votes, and the plebiscite on April 13, resulted in 758,742 votes for and 325,322 against the Republic. The National Assembly then met to consider the new Constitution, which declared Greece a "Hellenic Republic" with the office of President, and provided for the creation of a Senate. But before

the discussion got well under way the Government fell, M. Sophoules following M. Papanastassiou in the Premiership, who in turn was followed by M. Michalakopoulos, a Republican Conservative. The Government's task was not easy. There were mutinies in the fleet and irritating interference by the army in politics. There followed the breaking-up of the Greco-Serbian alliance of 1913, and the difficulties caused with Turkey over the expulsion of the Ecumenical Patriarch from Constantinople in violation of the Treaty of Lausanne. Suddenly, on June 25, 1925, General Pangalos, with only twenty-eight men at his disposal, seized the Telegraph Office and the National Bank, overthrew the Government and proceeded to govern, at first as Premier. Later he dissolved Parliament and governed dictatorially. He made the death penalty retrospective, and publicly hanged two officials guilty of misappropriating national funds. He prohibited the expression of Republican opinion and banished the ex-Republican Premiers along with General Kondyles to the volcanic island of Santorin. He nearly plunged Greece into war with Bulgaria, following upon a frontier incident which occurred near Demir Capu. Only by the prompt intervention of the League of Nations was war averted. This eccentric and dangerous dictator was overthrown by a *coup d'état* by General Kondyles (August 22, 1926), who, after governing for a few months, yielded authority to an Ecumenical Government under M. Zaimes, including the three Republican ex-Premiers MM. Papanastassiou, Michalakopoulos and Capandares, and the Royalist leaders, M. Tsaldares and General Metaxas. The new Government was at first fully occupied in clearing up the confusion caused by the régime of General Pangalos. After passing the "Constitution" the Government resigned over the question of gold reserves of the National Bank, and was followed by a coalition Government, also under M. Zaimes, but without M. Tsaldares' Populists.

After a successful loan of £9,000,000 had been floated in the British and American markets for the stabilisation of the currency, the wiping off of budget deficits and the settlement of refugees, the Government found itself in difficulties over a host of internal issues, and M. Papanastassiou resigned on February 3, 1928.

The dissensions within the Cabinet were becoming more acute, and the Liberals did not hide their dissatisfaction at the handling of affairs by their leader, M. Caphandares.

Venizelos, who had returned to Crete from Paris, found himself overwhelmed with requests to assume the leadership of his party. As the Press attacks against him from a section of dissentient Liberals were becoming more violent, he was obliged to defend himself in a letter in which he criticised certain aspects of M. Caphandares's policy. The latter, finding his position untenable, announced his resignation from the leadership of the Progressive Liberals on May 19, and Venizelos, yielding to the advice of his wife and his close friends, assumed the leadership of the party to prevent it from dissolution. But he could not be in Greece for long without becoming Prime Minister. On May 22 M. Caphandares resigned from the Government, but accepted office in the reconstituted Government of M. Zaimis a week later. Another strong criticism from Venizelos of M. Caphandares's financial policy led to the resignation of the Government, and on July 3, 1928, Venizelos was invited for the seventh time to assume the Premiership. On July 9, he dissolved Parliament.

* * *

The return of Venizelos to politics was the triumph of his wife's consistent persuasion. With charming vanity she had urged him on, nursing the desire to become the first Greek lady! London bred, wealthy, accustomed to the traditional comforts of a placid and complacent society where political bitterness never permits differences to shadow the social functions of the ministers' wives, she expected that the same social immunity would be extended to her in Athens. But chivalry as practised in England has not rooted itself in the Greek soil. Wives are not sacrosanct! Though she proved herself to be a woman actuated by the highest of philanthropic motives and practising virtuous charity, her wealth and the grand style of their life did not particularly commend itself to the Greeks, who had been accustomed to see their Venizelos financially insolvent, and instinctively held him to be on their side in the struggle against plutocracy.

The day after Parliament was dissolved, President Countouriotis, after some hesitation, signed a decree abolishing proportional representation and restoring the system of single member constituencies for the coming elections. The new Prime Minister was convinced that only by the adoption of the English electoral system would Greece be able to have a strong and stable Government, as the issue would not have to be decided between a dozen political parties, but between the Liberals and their allies (Republicans) and the Populists and their allies (Royals). In order to ensure that the maximum of liberty was given during the elections, Venizelos guaranteed full electoral freedom to the Populists, who consistently refused to recognise the Republic, and even released the ex-Dictator Pangalos from prison and restored to him his political rights. With the stage set, and the promise given that the new Government was not to be prejudiced against any political party, the electoral campaign began.

As of old, Venizelos found Greece in the throes of despair; the Treasury almost empty, the peasantry groaning under a system of excessive taxation, the army and navy in a state of rebellion and disorganisation, with hundreds of thousands of refugees still unsettled, or living in wooden huts hastily and temporarily erected four years earlier, and the countryside overrun by bandits. The same radical measures as those adopted in 1910 were needed to restore confidence, promote trade, keep the army to its professional duties and enforce the rule of law. He emphasised that Greece was now a homogeneous state and had no ambitions of territorial expansion. He promised no immediate relief in taxation, but promised that the Government "will immediately give the most earnest consideration to the problem of effecting a less irksome assessment of the existing taxation" and added that, in four years' time, Greece would be so prosperous as to be unrecognisable in comparison with the Greece of 1928.

This unhappy phrase followed him through the years of economic crisis, reverberating as a hollow mockery of his optimism.

The general election was held on August 19, the Liberals securing 203 seats out of the 240 in the Chamber.

The Venizelos of 1928 was not the Venizelos of 1910, or of the wars of liberation. Exile and wealth had blunted his keenness as a political antagonist, and had tinged his outlook with strong sympathy for everything British. But the rebel was not entirely hidden in the garment of the statesman. He was no longer the agitator, the crusader, but was yet the teacher who sought to instruct and open new vistas of political thought. He sought to reproduce the essence of the British Parliamentary system and ostracise political rancour from the Chamber. But the task was beyond him. He tried to conciliate the opposition, to establish personal friendship with M. Tsaldares and the other oppositional leaders, in the traditional British fashion, but an occasional word, charged with the same old venom, would undo his efforts. He was seen at official banquets in earnest conversation with M. Tsaldares, but his enemies were convinced that he acted in a haughty and condescending spirit.

He had sworn to uphold the Constitution, and yet when some of his supporters tried to persuade him to put up as candidate for the Presidency of the Republic, he answered: "If I were President, with such a Constitution as ours, either I or the Constitution would break." When M. Galopoulos, President of the Department of Hygiene in the Ministry of the Interior, was arrested on charges of embezzlement and his case was *sub judice*, the Premier declared: "I know M. Galopoulos, he is a very honest man," which was far from the truth!

At the age of sixty-four, Venizelos gladly shouldered the task of regenerating Greece. It was by no means easy. Never in his career had he adopted radical measures or destroyed anything to enable him to rebuild it as he thought fit. He inherited a Constitution and a system, and although he did his utmost to infuse enthusiasm, and promote efficiency, in the administrative work, he had to be content with the material at hand. The tradition of corruption was strong. Some of his colleagues were honest and some efficient, but it was very rare to find one who was both honest and efficient. The Greek civil servant looks upon his governmental job as a source of illicit income, and with Venizelos rolling complacently in comfort and devoted to the study of Shakespeare, corruption was not, and could not be, curbed.

In his position, he found it more easy to occupy himself with questions of diplomacy and foreign affairs than with the rough task of internal reconstruction. With three of his neighbours, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Turkey, Greek relations were strained. Italy, since the Corfu incident, had joined the list of hostile countries, and the official encouragement given by the Athenian Government to the Dodecanese Nationalists was fatal to any possibility of *rapprochement*. Venizelos's conception of the foreign relations of Greece ran as follows:—

- (1) Greece cannot mix in the quarrels of the Great Powers or associate herself with any of the opposing groups of Powers.
- (2) To achieve this she must establish friendly relations with all her neighbours and obviate the possibility of having to rely on any particular Great Power, either politically or economically.
- (3) By establishing friendly relations with her neighbours and the Great Powers, particularly the Mediterranean Powers, Greece could afford to maintain her position of independence.

Starting from this basis, Venizelos sought to rehabilitate good relations and preserve the independence of his country. On September 23, he signed a Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration with Italy, in which all outstanding questions between the two countries were settled. Venizelos thought it unwise at that juncture to challenge the Italian declaration of October 8, 1922, that owing to the non-ratification of the Treaty of Sèvres, the Venizelos-Tittoni agreement had lapsed and the Dodecanese were to remain Italian. So the question of the Twelve Islands was not raised, with Greece tacitly approving the Italian occupation. On October 11, he signed at Belgrade an agreement (negotiated beforehand with Dr. Marinkovich in Paris) by which the troublesome question of the Salonika Free Zone was amicably settled. The zone was to remain under Greek sovereignty, but to be open to Yugoslav trade in both directions, while the railway to Gevgjeli, owned by a Yugoslav firm, was bought by the Greek Government. These settlements were followed by a Treaty of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement in Belgrade in

March 1929. Full diplomatic relations were re-opened with Bulgaria with the appointment of a Minister to represent the Greek Republic in Sofia, and a Convention was signed with Albania in November 1928.

In the space of a few months, Venizelos succeeded in bringing some order into the diplomatic chaos of Greek foreign relations. The enemies of yesterday became, as a result of some concessions and minor adjustments, the friends of to-day! But the chief obstacle to any general, or Balkanic understanding, was the strained state of relations between Greece and Bulgaria and between Greece and Turkey. With Bulgaria the differences could have been easily smoothed out had the Bulgarian Government shown willingness to negotiate, and not made herself a hostage to its own General Staff. Furthermore, the Bulgarian Government made it semi-officially known that as long as the outlet to the Aegean, guaranteed to her by Article 48 of the Treaty of Neuilly, was not conceded, she would refuse to negotiate. But to the specific soundings by the Greek Minister in Sofia as to the place and the conditions under which the outlet was to be granted, Bulgaria gave no definite answer, and her silence helped to strengthen the belief among the Greek Government that Bulgaria was not demanding a commercial outlet, but a strip of territory cutting across Thrace or Macedonia, which she intended eventually to annex. After two years of persistent endeavours, Venizelos failed to arrive at an understanding with Bulgaria. Speaking on October 11, 1930, to a group of Bulgarian journalists who came to Athens for the first Balkan Conference, Venizelos made a final attempt to conciliate his neighbours across the frontier. "The existing difficulties about the Bulgar minority in Greek Macedonia," he said, "could be adjusted by degrees." He expressed himself ready to grant them schools if asked for and other facilities. He was ready to allow Bulgaria to have a port on the coast of Western Thrace, through which Bulgarian traffic could find an outlet to the Aegean, and while waiting for Bulgaria to ask for the port, he was prepared to let her have a free zone at Salonika. Moreover, he would permit the railway system between the two countries to be linked up.

The offer was not even considered. So Venizelos, convinced

at last that nothing would induce the Bulgarians either to negotiate or state their grievances officially, ceased his overtures and was contented to leave Greco-Bulgarian relations in a state of non-committal so-called "diplomatic friendship."

By far the greatest achievement of his administration was the rehabilitation of good relations with Turkey. The task was both difficult and dangerous, as in the eyes of Greek Nationalists Greco-Turkish differences were looked upon as important antagonisms. Any attempt at *rapprochement* was interpreted by them as an attack on the nation. Prejudice, encouraged by Press polemics, blocked the way to a better understanding. Venizelos, through friendly references to the rulers of Turkey in his public utterances, and his consistent refusal to be provoked in the Assembly into any anti-Turkish declaration, prepared the ground for fruitful diplomatic negotiations. When questioned by the opposition why he was not taking any measures to increase the strength of the Greek fleet in view of the fact that Turkey had repaired and modernised the *Goeben* (renamed *Yavuz*)—he answered characteristically, "I cannot foresee any European war breaking out before 1938 and consequently I decline to begin preparations for war now. Our relations with Turkey are friendly and I cannot accept the contention that the strengthening of her fleet constitutes any danger to us." He assured Turkey both diplomatically and officially through the League of Nations that Greece had no idea of territorial expansion. The Press polemics gradually sobered down, and on March 2, 1930, the Greek Minister at Angora was instructed to begin negotiations anew for an agreement covering the differences arising out of the Anatolian war of 1922, making it known in advance that Greece was prepared to honour her financial obligations. Characteristic of the changing attitude was the presence of the Turkish Minister at the centenary celebrations of Greek independence on March 25, 1930, which drew a warm expression of appreciation from Venizelos.

After prolonged discussions, during which many concessions by either side were made, an agreement was signed at Angora on June 10, 1930, between M. Polychroniades and Tewfik Rushdi Bey, by which Greece agreed to pay £425,000 as compensation

in respect of the exchange of populations. Complete settlement, however, was not arrived at until October, and when finally all the preliminary discussions were ended Venizelos visited Angora, where he signed (October 30) treaties of Friendship and Commerce with Turkey. The personal friendship which blossomed by a Swiss lake between Venizelos and Ismet developed now into friendship between the two Governments, and the two enemy peoples.

Rarely has diplomatic action of this kind been followed by such a complete change of public feeling. Ismet Pasha, on visiting Athens a year later, was given a welcome such as few foreign friends of Greece have ever had. Following upon this treaty, Greco-Turkish relations have developed harmoniously ever since.

Not all the Greek parties were behind Venizelos in this move. Some Royalist officers in communication with the King (who left London for Bucharest in order to be near enough to be seen) plotted the overthrow of the Government to prevent the signing of the treaty with Turkey, intending to offer the King the opportunity of saving his country! Meanwhile a section of the Press, with the hysterical firebrand Vlachos (editor of *Kathimerini*) leading the way, began to stir up the relics of morbid chauvinism. The *coup* was to take place on October 30, but the Government, informed of what was afoot, took precautionary measures, and nipped the conspiracy in the bud by arresting the protagonists, most of whom were followers of General Pangalos.

The refugees, who had voted for Venizelos almost to a man, were vociferous in their opposition to the Greco-Turkish *rapprochement*. Many of them still hoped that they might get ample compensation for the losses they had sustained, while some were still under the illusion that they might regain their lost country and property. When the Chamber was discussing the settlement of June 10, Venizelos challenged all parties to oppose if they dared this signal advance towards harmony in the Near East. He challenged them to assume the responsibility if they dared of leaving the country friendless and exposed to incalculable dangers. Greece, he added, had spent £80,000,000 on the refugees, whose representatives were foremost in the attack against the settlement, and would make no further sacrifices.

A week after his return from Angora, Venizelos issued a statement, intended to dispel French fears, that Greece and Turkey had entered the "revisionist bloc." "Greece and Turkey," ran the statement, "in their new treaty, recognise the Treaty of Lausanne as final; consequently, there is no reason why these two countries should combine for the revision of treaties for the benefit of third parties. Should the desire for a revision of those treaties lead to armed strife, Greece and Turkey by their new Treaty have agreed to remain neutral."¹

* * *

The spirit of Liberalism infused by Venizelos into Balkan diplomacy soon became evident in auspicious moves to promote understanding among the different States of the Peninsula. Other statesmen followed his example, and in a comparatively short time the Balkans became united by a host of bilateral treaties which, though not a complete substitute in themselves for a comprehensive peace treaty settlement, nevertheless fulfilled the functions of such a settlement. Once blackmail and intimidation are done away with, the possibilities of a general appeasement are increased. A genuine attempt to arrive at some kind of collective understanding was made by the convening of a Balkan Conference in Athens under the auspices of the Bureau International de la Paix. Though the movement was only semi-official in character and was called at the instigation of private initiative, the Greek Chamber of Deputies discussed it favourably and instructed its President to communicate to the other Balkan Governments the pleasure with which the Greek Government welcomed the Conference. It also ordered the permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs to follow the proceedings of the Conference as an observer.

At the opening of the Conference in Athens, October 5, 1930, Venizelos addressed the delegates and gave the movement the support of the Greek Government. "No one fails to appreciate the difficulty," he said, "of bringing about a union of the Balkan States; we all recognise that it can be accomplished only by stages. But if you begin with the points on which agreement is easier,

¹ John Mavrocordato, *Modern Greece*, p. 178.

you will create an atmosphere in which the successive settlement of more difficult questions about which differences of opinion are at present more serious, will become possible." The Balkan Conference was the forerunner of, and prepared the ground for, the Balkan Pact. Venizelos never wavered in his belief of an ultimate Balkan Federation, but wanted the understanding among peoples to be real, and to be based on reciprocity of interests and friendship and not on the clauses of a military alliance. It was his view that every state should make some concessions, and some minor but necessary adjustments, which would enable confidence and loyalty to develop, and was against being stampeded into alliances which only postpone war without avoiding it. This is why, later on, he violently attacked the Balkan Pact.

During his Premiership, the Cypriot nationalist movement for union with Greece was considerably strengthened. Officially, Venizelos advised the Cypriot Nationalists to cease demanding union, to cease acting in permanent opposition to the administration of their country, and to utilise the few opportunities afforded by the Constitution to provide for an administration conscious of Cypriot requirements. Unofficially, however, he was encouraging both the Cypriot and the Dodecanese nationalists. Several critics in Greece have accused him of secretly instigating the Cyprus revolution of October 1931 and of deserting the Cypriots in their hour of need. The author has heard much information from various sources tending to bear out that Venizelos was involved in the preparations for the insurrection, but as practically all of them are at variance on points of detail, he is disinclined to place any credit in them. That Venizelos was favourably disposed towards the Cypriots and the Dodecanese in their national aspirations is true, but that his sympathies went further than academic interest, is by no means certain. The Greek Consul in Cyprus, M. A. Kyrou, a young man of Cypriot extraction with latent Fascist sympathies (his brother, the editor of *Hestia*, was the first to begin Fascist propaganda in Greece, and later his paper came under Nazi influence) was urging the Nationalists forward, promising them all sorts of assistance from the Greek Government without being instructed or em-

powered to do so. He presented himself as being in the confidence of Venizelos in order to add more weight to his advices—hence the rumours of Venizelos's alleged complicity. The Cypriot insurrection was not the work of outside instigation. It sprang directly from the conditions of Cyprus, political and economic, and provided a rather strong commentary on the 'development' achieved by a small island after more than fifty years of British rule. Venizelos hastened at once to condemn the Cypriot insurrection, but in so doing, he placed himself in an awkward position with regard to public opinion, which was wholeheartedly behind the struggling Cypriots. Even some of his closest supporters turned against him and condemned his attitude.

It might be said that the success of the Cretan revolution started Venizelos on his upward career and the failure of the Cypriot revolution finished that career!

For four years Greece enjoyed a certain measure of political stability. The army was made to mind its own business, vested interests were curbed as far as possible, and the workers and peasants were allowed full liberty of organisation. The Republic was further consolidated by a Bill creating the Senate, as provided by the Constitution of 1927. The Senate which could act as a restraint to the more violent excesses of the Chamber and provide balance and continuity in the administration, consisted of 120 members, of whom 92 were elected, 18 chosen by professional bodies and 10 by the Chamber, the Senate and the Council of State. The first Senatorial elections, held on April 21, 1929, yielded a considerable Venizelist majority.

In every move, the Prime Minister was obstructed by a small but noisy opposition and the extravagance of a licentious Press. The inclusion in the Cabinet of General Gonatas, whose revolutionary record was not forgotten by his enemies, was the signal for wild attacks by the Populists. For a moment it appeared that the nation was drifting back once more to the pre-Republican days. Only the immense prestige of the Premier and his unchallenged influence over the army saved the Republic from a counter-revolution.

With Venizelos back in the saddle, finance and capital again extended their dubious blessings to Greece. A public works loan was issued in London in December 1929, and on January 25, 1930, another loan was arranged with an American group for roads and drainage. On February 16, a British firm obtained a £6,000,000 contract for land reclamation and irrigation. On the same day, the United States Congress ratified the war debt settlement by which Greece was to pay \$18,125,000 in sixty-two years and receive a loan of \$12,167,000 for the final settlement of refugees and for internal reconstruction. The Convention between the Refugee Settlement Commission and the Greek Government was approved by the League of Nations in February 1930, by which all further Refugee Settlements were to be undertaken by the Government as from the end of the year. Perhaps one of the most astounding achievements of modern times is the absorption of about a million and a half refugees by the small Greek State of just over five million people. By the beginning of 1931, 170,000 families were settled on the land at a cost of £13,400,000 and a decisive part of the remainder given employment of some kind or another. The population of Athens was almost trebled, and by the end of this period, new quarters had sprung round the city, with modern squares and town-planning. With the reorganisation of administration, the Foreign Naval and Police Mission came to an end. The Marathon dam at last provided Athens with its greatest need—water, the contract for which was given to an American company, the supply being inaugurated on June 3, 1931. Macedonian marshlands were being drained to make arable land. Brigandage was suppressed, laws were promulgated for the prevention of cruelty to animals, for the apportioning of the ecclesiastical property expropriated by the revolution among landless peasants, etc.

In July 1931, Venizelos visited England to take part in the ceremonies at the presentation of Newstead Abbey, the home of Lord Byron, to the City of Nottingham. During his stay he saw several prominent politicians, including Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Arthur Henderson, Foreign Secretary, with whom he had a friendly conversation about international affairs and the League of Nations, and about the progress of Greco-Turkish relations.

After three years of office, Venizelos could boast that he had done everything in his power to give Greece peace and prosperity. "As long as I am in power, there is no fear of rebellion," he declared. "Yes!" retorted an angry deputy, "there is no fear of rebellion as long as you are in power because you are the one who makes them." Greece had become the friend of both the opposing groups of states in Continental Europe and the satellite of neither. Venizelos could point to the friendship with Turkey as the true fruit of great statesmanship, and as a factor of stability in the Orient. Indeed, under his Premiership, the reputation of Greek diplomacy was raised to great heights. Had he no other claim to fame, the *rapprochement* effected between Greece and Turkey was an achievement to be proud of. And he had also concluded pacts with Italy, Albania, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, etc. He could not claim, however, that the same success attended his efforts for internal reconstruction. Diplomacy was no substitute for falling prices, unemployment, and general economic deterioration. As his sole method of alleviating poverty was by borrowing, the results were not so beneficial as they appeared. He had to contend also with the chaos produced by the world economic crisis. The national economy of Greece was severely hit, and as he could neither stave off the ruin caused by the crisis nor promise any substantial alleviation of taxation, he felt the full blast of discontent directed against him and against his administration.

All Governments long in power are liable to attrition. The omnipotent Premier disliked contradiction, was impervious to criticism and unwilling to play the demagogue or dance to the tune of vested interests' piping. His colleagues were not well chosen and no proper control was kept over them—a difficult thing at any time in a constitutional government. As in 1920, he did not stoop to demagogic, nor did he tour the country to arouse the people to a realisation of the achievements of his administration. "Deeds speak louder than words," but he forgot that people have short memories except for grievances. Half the Liberal Press was against him over the question of Cyprus and because of the protection he afforded to unworthy colleagues. Unable to enforce a decree restricting the license of the Press—

particularly that of the foreign subsidised reactionary Press—he resigned office in May 1932 to resume it again a week later, after a brief administration by M. Papanastassiou.

The September (1932) elections were fought over two main issues, internal administration and the reduction of taxation. In foreign policy both the Liberals and the Populists were in agreement. The declaration of M. Tsaldares that he accepted the Republic and did not entertain any intentions of changing the régime robbed the Venizelists of their thunder. Only one hundred of them were returned as against ninety-five Populists. The remaining fifty-five were divided among seven parties. In the circumstances, a coalition Government was indicated, but M. Tsaldares refused to associate with the Liberals and preferred to form his own administration. In a letter to the President of the Republic on October 3, M. Tsaldares declared categorically that his party “recognised the Republic unreservedly.” There was no further reason for barring him from office, and on November 4, 1932, he formed a Coalition Government including General Kondyles and General Metaxas. The new Government could only muster one hundred and three votes in the Assembly and was forced to exist on the sufferance of the opposition.

Venizelos, in his endeavours to develop a parliamentary system of Government, made by far the greatest effort to enable parliament to work. He asked for the dissolution of the Military League, which was formed to protect the Republic, relying unreservedly on M. Tsaldares’s given pledge, and hastened to declare that his party would extend “toleration” to the new Government. M. Tsaldares, who was easily influenced, fell completely under the sway of the extreme Royalist General Metaxas, and after two months in office he was forced to resign (January 13, 1933) as all the opposition Leaders withdrew their support from his Government. Venizelos became Prime Minister for the tenth time, and formed a Coalition Cabinet, including three ex-Premiers and the Leader of the Agrarians. He made up his quarrel with his former lieutenant, M. Caphandares, and appointed him Finance Minister. But as his Government was unlikely to command a majority in the Chamber (nominally it

had a majority of two) he advised the President to convoke the Senate in order to dissolve Parliament without meeting the Chamber. This high-handed action had the worst possible repercussion. The opposition accused him of violating the Constitution and the Press developed the matter into a conspiracy by which the Republic was to be overthrown and Venizelos be installed as dictator. The questions of finance and the safety of the régime became the contest of the ensuing elections, held on March 5, 1933, in which the Venizelist Coalition obtained 109 seats and M. Tsaldares and his supporters 132.

On the following morning (March 6, 1936) the Athenians awoke to the noise of the cannon firing blank shots from Lykabettos. General Plasteras, on learning of the results of the elections, declared himself dictator, ordered the arrest of the Populist leaders, and issued a flamboyant declaration that he was intervening by the will of God to save the nation. Such was the opposition provoked by the declaration that the General was forced to abandon the attempt and flee after twelve hours of fruitless rule. The officers, as a body, did not support him and the people of Athens came out in such numbers that the military was powerless. In the evening Tsaldares and Venizelos met the President of the Republic and agreed to the formation of a provisional Government under General Othonaios, the chief of the Supreme Army Council. When the situation had returned to normal the officers laid down their authority and M. Tsaldares formed his second administration, assisted from outside by General Metaxas.

The complicity of Venizelos in the *coup d'état* of General Plasteras was taken for granted by the Populists. The truth is that Plasteras and many Liberal officers, as well as many Liberal deputies, had lost by now any confidence in Venizelos's capabilities to save the Republic from the machinations of Rhalles and Metaxas. His conciliatory attitude towards the opposition was resented, because they considered it was giving undue encouragement to the subversive activities of the Royalists. One of the principal reasons why Plasteras's coup failed was because Venizelos refused to support him. Yet this did not deter his detractors from attacking him on these grounds.

Party strife flared up once more. At first it took the form of minor criticisms directed against Venizelos, but gradually it developed into a contest for or against the Republic. Several army officers, having at their head the retired Generals Koimises and Papoulas, formed the "Democratic Defence League" and the Populists, under the head of the Chief of Security Police, formed the "Popular Defence League," under which euphemistic name they were actively working for the restoration of the Monarchy. The chief obstacle to the realisation of that end was considered to be Venizelos. They were determined to have him out of the way. The Government was weak and unable to control its supporters, the Chamber had ceased to be the rostrum for the discussion of national problems and had become a place where insults and blows were exchanged. Many deputies were seen coming to the Chamber with their hip-pockets bulging with a revolver. An air of fatality pervaded the work of the Chamber, and every appearance of Venizelos was accompanied by cat-calls and shouts of "Out!" "Out!" Towards the end of May, the situation appeared dangerous. Government and opposition were ready to settle their differences, both outside and inside the Chamber, with knives and pistols. Venizelos entered the Chamber one afternoon while Metaxas was speaking. The General claimed to have devastating evidence to prove the complicity of Venizelos in the coup of General Plasteras. Pointing an accusing finger at the ex-Premier, he charged him with deliberately plotting the murder of his rivals, and placed on him all the responsibility of the internecine warfare of the last twenty years. Venizelos rose up and calmly ascended the Tribune. "Gentlemen," he began, "General Plasteras has rendered many and great services to the nation." An angry cry went up from the Government benches. He was shouted down, insulted while he stood calmly, gazing contemptuously at the pitiful exhibition of parliamentary misdemeanour. When the noise died down, Venizelos continued, "As I was saying, Gentlemen, General Plasteras has rendered many and great services to the nation." More angry scenes followed. The shouts became more vociferous. "Down with the traitor," shouted the Government supporters. "Down with Venizelos." The deputies came to blows, while a

number of them ran to the Tribune to pull Venizelos down. His supporters saved him, but as he could no longer get a hearing he crossed the floor to leave the House. At the door he hesitated for a moment, and then, turning to face the deputies, said with cruel sarcasm, "Gentlemen, I will not return to this House until I am convinced that it has ceased to be a Spanish bull-ring." With that he made a stiff bow and left.

* * *

It will not be irrelevant to attempt to give here a brief characterisation of Venizelos. His enemies, while acknowledging his undoubted qualities, heaped on him all the vices that blind partisanship could load on any man. This is how M Cosmetatos, in his book *The Tragedy of Greece* sums up Venizelos. This book, incidentally, is nothing more than a carefully documented "libel" which attempts to paint an impartial picture by suppressing all evidence tending to throw credit upon Venizelos's policy.

"Eleutherios Venizelos, born and brought up in Crete, in the raw, bitter atmosphere of party warfare, retained throughout his life the imprint of his early environment. While still young, he exhibited in Crete a disconcerting mixture of lofty qualities and grave defects. When he first became Premier of Greece he made a brilliant impression by his intelligence; but his intelligence was fragmentary. He never understood the difference between good and bad."

"A shrewd politician, a skilful diplomat, an excellent speaker, he had all the talents required to make a remarkable statesman. But to these lofty qualities was added a restless and subversive spirit. He was adventurous, often inconsistent, ardent, passionate. Nothing could restrain his least ambition or caprice. Conspiracy and treason were to him a game. He was an excellent actor, and could play all parts to perfection. He might have fashioned the renaissance of Hellas. Instead he employed his intelligence in the satisfaction of his passions through civil war."¹

This is the attitude taken up more or less by all his embittered enemies, from journalists like G. F. Abbott and Paxton Hibben to Royal writers of memoirs like Princes Nicolas, Andrew and Christopher. "By nature," writes Mr. Abbott, "he was more fitted to rule in a despotic than lead in a Constitutional State. Had he been born an Emperor, his fertile genius might, unless betrayed by his restless ambition, have rendered his reign prosperous and his memory precious. As it is, in his career, with all its brilliance, posterity will find not so much a pattern to imitate

¹ Pages 317-318.

as an example to deter." How much of this is true the reader already knows. Had he been driven by autocratic impulses he could have made himself the life-long ruler of Greece. On the contrary, throughout his career he denounced despotism, fought against authoritarian rule, and upheld the democratic ideal as the ultimate goal of political progress.

The greatest asset of Venizelos was his personal charm or what might be called the magnetism of his personality. Right up to old age, his eyes preserved an extraordinary youthful brightness, while his mind was as quick and agile as in early youth. Had it not been for his snowy white beard and the white hair escaping from under his hat, one could hardly have determined his age. Everything about him was feline. The same penetrating, steady, inscrutable and unrevealing gaze; the same agility and graceful movements as a cat. At the age of sixty-six he would ascend the stairs leading to the Chamber with the elastic, springing steps of the "King of the beasts."

He had the habit of gazing not at the eyes, but at the forehead of the person confronting him, with an uncomfortable penetrating steadiness. When he was talking, his face lit up. Emil Ludwig contrasted Venizelos to Bernard Shaw. The same youthful, smooth skin, the same mischievous eyes and restless spirit, with this difference, that the nose of the politician was longer and the forehead of the intellectual higher.

Like all great men, he was at times almost childlike in his behaviour. He would be happy or appear grave over trivial things, while he maintained a remarkable composure at the most critical moments. Many times he was seen pushing his grandson—young Eleutherios—in the swings of the Phaleron playground. Then he would get on the swing himself and ask the youngster to push him. Those present would laugh at the efforts of the child to set the swing in motion. Venizelos, dismounting, would turn to the onlookers and excuse the failure of his grandson with an air of innocent simplicity. "You see, he is very young! He cannot do it." On one occasion when the Press—particularly the opposition Press—was exceedingly violent towards him because of a declaration he had made in the Chamber the previous evening about the "execution of the six," a dozen journalists

called at his residence at the Petit Palais to get his further views on the matter. Venizelos locked himself in and refused to see anyone. He was unyielding to the persistent requests of the journalists. Then all the journalists began shouting in unison under his windows that they would stay there until they could secure the interview. After about two hours of singing and shouting, Venizelos came on to the balcony gesticulating violently and white with anger. "Can't one have peace, even in his own home," he said. "You are behaving like a lot of barbarians." Protesting, he had to submit to about half an hour of journalistic cross-examination. The ridiculousness of the position—a Prime Minister standing on the balcony and a pack of journalists shouting at each other across the lawns of the hotel—did not escape anybody's observation, and the interview ended with general mirth. A scrutiny of a dozen papers the following morning revealed that while the essence of the interview was more or less accurately reported, textually every paper put different words into the Premier's mouth.

If he occasionally refused to see the representatives of the Press he was at times subjected to the gruelling ordeal of having to answer questions in the street, while leaving his residence, entering his car, stepping out of the Chamber, or wherever the journalists could get hold of him.

It was chiefly during the debates in the Chamber that the full stature of Venizelos, as contrasted with his contemporaries, could be effectively gauged. King Constantine said, years earlier, that Venizelos could convince him about anything. Many of his opponents refused steadfastly to meet him for fear they might be converted to his views. Such was his eloquence and powers of reasoning that the most hostile crowd would be left enthralled, and having come to denounce him, would go away murmuring words of praise. He would usually begin his orations in Parliament by accepting some point or other from an opposition speech, and gradually broaden and develop the argument, so that by the time he was half-way through the speech, the opposition's arguments appeared to be pushed by the waves of his reasoning like a battered boat on to some deserted beach. It was not unusual for the opposition to break into cheers at the conclusion

of his speech, and it was only after he had resumed his seat that they would recollect themselves and resume their hostility.

His voice was strong, but it lacked masculine resonance. Yet there was a sweet, almost velvety softness about it which compelled attention and which somehow seemed to caress the audience. When aroused, his fierce eloquence and cogent reasoning could hold the breathless attention of the most listless of his hearers and subdue a crowd into rapt attention. He was direct in conversation, and possessed a charm of expression and persuasiveness of speech which conveyed the impression of innate power. It was this latter characteristic which—as a critic put it—"presented itself to Europe with all the picturesqueness of a distant Alpine picture; in Greece, however, it was apt to assume the devastating aspect of an avalanche." There were moments when that same power and impregnable will, which lifted him from the obscurity of local politics to European renown, were his own undoing. He did not arm himself with a real knowledge of his country's needs save with its major problems of policy and destiny, and he did not exercise the least care in selecting those who were to assist him to carry out his policy. He was not lacking in bold active leadership and decision, but his career was marred by a sense of loyalty to friends and colleagues, something which a man troubled with less scruples could have easily overcome.

Nowhere was his brilliance demonstrated more effectively than during the Paris Peace Conferences. Direct in method, courageous, skilful and inflexible in the pursuit of his main objective, he became the confidant and friend of Lloyd George and intolerably irritating to Clemenceau. No two men were less alike than Venizelos and Clemenceau. The one was cynical, the other an idealist. Clemenceau loved France, but hated Frenchmen and all the world collectively. There was no space in the compass of his vicious mind for noble thoughts or human understanding. The "Tiger" was rude and impatient, while Venizelos was civil, plausible, actuated by passionate faith, and could afford to wait and get the better of his redoubtable opponent. Clemenceau was once an ardent philhellene. But he was also an acid exponent of militant vindictiveness. After the incident of December 1916, in which Frenchmen were killed in an encounter with Greek

troops in Athens, and as a result of the two years of hesitation and bargaining which preceded the Greek entry into the war, Clemenceau came to hate the Greeks, Venizelists and anti-Venizelists alike, with the same passion as he hated his French political opponents. "Greece betrayed her history and her spirit," he declared, and buried his old sympathies under that epitaph. But at the end the "Tiger" was tamed. He yielded to the persistent efforts of Venizelos, and supported to a certain extent the claims of Greece at the Conference.

Great statesmen are sometimes able to give a definite form to movements which are vaguely stirring in the popular minds. They can mould contemporary opinion, give expression to unexpressed feelings, and act as the spokesmen of voiceless millions. In that sense Venizelos in his early years of power was supremely representative of Greece. He created a modern state out of a few provinces, instilled faith in a people easily subject to despair, and stimulated them to progress. He helped new forces to come to the fore. His intervention in Greece was a turning-point in the social history of the nation. A small section of a democratic people had, by virtue of ancient privileges, monopolised public office and controlled civil and military authority. For some time a middle class, roused by success in trade or in the professions, had been seeking to share the political power. Venizelos opened that door, the door of bourgeois predominance, and rallied behind him, organised in the Liberal Party, the forces which had been deprived of power by a privileged aristocracy. His Liberalism created the conditions which allowed the working-class and peasant classes to develop as political forces, but as these new forces could not be permitted to play their full part and Venizelos's Party was, in many respects, blocking their way, Venizelos ceased in his latter years to be a true representative of his country.

He himself was the best type of Liberal. When once he was asked to remove M. Glinos, the best known educational authority in Greece, from his post in the Ministry of Education because he was a Communist, Venizelos answered, "I am not interested in the opinions of M. Glinos. I know that if I had a child I would entrust its education to him." Venizelos's knowledge of history

was considerable and was well served by a prodigious memory. In letters from Paris soon after the war he urged his colleagues in Athens to make full historical use of the places being occupied by the Greek army in Asia Minor. For one place he would suggest an association with Alexander the Macedon, for another with Xenophon or a Byzantine Emperor, or would quote any other connection which a place might have had with Greek history. Once, on being asked about the question of capitulations, he explained, without looking up a single reference, the reasons which forced Suleiman the Magnificent to grant them to Europe. In parliamentary debates, though his prepared orations were effective, it was his sudden interventions which were more striking. Then his memory would come into full play, facts, dates and figures would pour out with breath-taking eloquence. The Athens correspondent of *Great Britain and the East* related that he had interviewed Venizelos on the Kellogg Pact and in conversation the latter used the phrase "the freedom of the seas." When the correspondent asked which of the various meanings of that famous phrase he meant, Venizelos at once proceeded to quote the Anglo-American war of 1812, showing close acquaintance with the question out of which it arose.

Neither in 1920 nor in 1932 could he foresee the defeat of his party at the polls, and yet when the above-mentioned correspondent asked him for a forecast of the results just before an English General Election, Venizelos wrote down on a piece of paper, Liberals so many, Conservatives so many, Labour so many. When the results were published he was only two votes out.

It has been said that he knew more about the internal affairs of France than of his own country. It is possible that, as a Cretan, and almost a foreigner to the mainland of Greece, to a considerable extent Greece remained for Venizelos a foreign country.

CHAPTER XIV

THE END

GREAT men cast an enormous shadow upon the historical scene. Unfortunately, opportunist friends often gratify base personal wants and enemies plot more or less undetected in the protection of that shadow.

Such had happened with Venizelos. Friends used their positions in his administration for personal enrichment and aggrandisement. The Royalists found that he alone stood between themselves and the monarchy. Out of office, in opposition or in exile, the influence he exercised over the minds of the Greek people was unmistakable. No action could be accepted as final to which Venizelos had registered disapproval. That he was deprived of speech in Parliament was not considered enough. Only his physical extermination would serve the purposes of the conspirators. His friends informed him of what was afoot, advised him to go abroad. But he refused even to consider it.

During the night of June 6, 1933, as Venizelos was returning with his wife in a motor-car from a dinner party at Kephissia, the assassins struck. In true Chicago fashion they chased Venizelos's car for three miles, riddling it with machine-gun bullets. Mde. Venizelos was wounded four times, one of his attendants killed and his chauffeur wounded. Venizelos escaped unscathed. It was only the courage and presence of mind of the chauffeur, who drove with one arm, the other being broken by a bullet, which saved his life. More than 120 bullet holes were counted in his car the following morning.

This outrage aroused the people of Athens almost to a man. In their thousands they demonstrated the following day in support of Venizelos. Strangely enough, the police, the guardians of law and order were nowhere to be seen. When, eventually, M. Polychronopoulos, the head of the Security Police and alleged instigator of the crime, appeared, such was the outcry from the people that he had to withdraw before the mob could mete

out rough justice to him. The Government made it a question of honour to secure the culprits within twenty-four hours, and bring them to justice. But the murderers were never punished!

For more than a year the police failed to discover the assassins. An investigation under a magistrate produced evidence of complicity in high police quarters, and M. Polychronopoulos and another police official were arrested. The former was almost instantly released, and while awaiting trial he was permitted to publish a newspaper of extreme anti-Venizelist content. At the end of 1933 the magistrate was superseded and his place taken by a member of the Court of Appeal. Several more arrests were made, but the police still failed to find the one so-called real culprit. The Liberal Opposition abstained from the Chamber for six months as a protest against the Government's procrastination in bringing the culprits to court, and Venizelos refused to take his seat with the return of the opposition, because the Government could not guarantee his personal safety.

The new inquiry was more ineffective than the one it had replaced. It was not until sixteen months afterwards—October 1934—that Venizelos's private Cretan guards arrested in Athens the notorious brigand Karathanases, suspected of being the chief marksman in the attempt. He was handed over to the police, but M. Polychronopoulos's paper accused the Liberals of maintaining their private police and interfering in the affairs of the State. The papers supporting General Metaxas took up the charge, and accused the Venizelists of being aware of the whereabouts of the brigand and of having deliberately shielded him to embarrass the work of the administration.

With the arrest of Karathanases the Government could no longer shirk the issue, and decided to bring the accused to trial in January 1935. The day before the trial was to take place there were disturbances in Athens and Piraeus and anti-Venizelist demonstrations. Several explosions took place, fortunately without much damage, near houses of some of those who had been summoned to serve on the jury. The Public Prosecutor, M. Reganakos, was replaced by M. Garezos, formerly chief of the Athens police and a friend of the accused police officials.

The failure of fourteen of the jurymen to attend the court the

following morning led to the postponement of the trial, which, after being postponed for a second time, eventually opened in Athens on February 21. There were 167 witnesses for the prosecution and 220 for the defence, but before the trial got under way, the Venizelist uprising of March 1, 1936, gave an excuse, which the Government accepted with delight, to stop the proceedings and release all the accused, with the exception of the brigand Karathanases, who was detained to answer for another crime, and acclaim them as national heroes!

Who was the instigator of the crime has not yet been made known. There were strong rumours at the time alleging the complicity of M. J. Rhalles, Minister of the Interior, M. Mavromichales, Deputy of the extreme right, and others, which tended to implicate Madame Tsaldares, whose great desire to see her husband President of the Greek Republic was said to be the motive. But these were only rumours and must be accepted as such. That the police were the organisers of the crime has been accepted as definitely established, but what were the motives and who the powers behind the scenes, has not yet been established.

The Government acted with extreme cowardice over the question. They made brave declarations, but did not press the issue to a logical conclusion. In spite of M. Tsaldares's apparent sincerity and his will to prosecute the powerful conspirators who controlled his administration behind the scenes, he stayed his hand.

Venizelos is reported to have said, when asked as to who might have been his would-be murderers, that he suspected "General John Metaxas." Suspicion, however, cannot be accepted as the truth, particularly as there were many more suspects in the field who might have had a hand in it. It is true that Metaxas's name has been connected with many anti-Republicans and anti-Venizelist incidents. Early in 1933, hundreds of men went round the streets of Athens shouting for the arrest of Venizelos for being a party to the plot of General Plasteras. Metaxas was taken to be the man behind this Greek mafia. The same gang created scenes at the opening of the trial and exploded dynamite near the houses of unfriendly jurymen. They were the same people who, a few

months afterwards, were shouting for death sentences upon all those implicated in the revolution of March 1936, the same who provided the social support and the applause for General Kondyles's action in deposing M. Tsaldares and proclaiming Greece a monarchy, and the same who demonstrated in March 1936 against bringing the body of Venizelos to Athens.

* * *

The attack was a severe physical and mental shock to Venizelos. He was no longer his former self, and was particularly grieved to see the Government's deliberate reluctance to punish his attackers. After a brief visit to London in the summer of 1933, he retired to Crete, an embittered and revengeful man. Out of office, he attacked more fiercely than ever the Balkan Pact signed in Athens on February 9, 1934. Though this Pact really followed the lines he had himself laid down, and represented the logical development of his policy, it is doubtful whether Venizelos, in office, would have signed the Pact in its present form.

He particularly criticised its vagueness, and the uncertain extent of the obligations implied by the Pact. Its ratification, he maintained, would involve a fundamental change in the Greek historic policy of friendship with all, and would embroil Greece in extra-Balkan commitments. No instrument could prove beneficial to Greece unless it was satisfactory and accepted by her two neighbours, Bulgaria and Albania. Its ratification would involve Greece in a war between Yugoslavia and Italy regardless of the interests of the country or the merits of the case. If there was to be a pact, it should be regional in character and embrace the whole of the Balkan States. Here Venizelos was speaking with unrivalled knowledge derived from twenty-five years' experience of dealing with Balkan questions. Any attempt to create exclusive blocs would be followed by counter-attempts to draw the excluded parties into the orbit of hostile alliances.

Italy, needless to say, was delighted with Venizelos's policy in relation to the Pact, since she found that he assisted her efforts to break up the Balkan *entente*. But that the policy of Venizelos was correct and that Italy's fears were motivated chiefly by her enmity against Yugoslavia have been demonstrated during the

subsequent years. While the relations of Greece with Bulgaria and Albania remained estranged, Italy did not find the Balkan Pact any obstruction in spreading the tentacles of Fascist policy over Yugoslavia.

All the good work done by Venizelos towards promoting parliamentary decency and healing the national schism was destroyed by the mad attempt of the assassins. Civility and toleration were thrown to the winds. The Liberals taunted the Populists with plotting the restoration of the monarchy, and the Populists retorted that the Liberals were conspiring to overthrow the Republic and establish party dictatorship. The past was dug up to play its part in the quarrel. The Government's weakness in dealing with the culprits added fuel to the fire. Under these conditions, the extremists of both sides were gaining control and preparing for violent action.

The Liberal "Republican Defence League," fearing a coup from the extreme Royalists, sought to forestall it by an uprising of its own. A major sensation was caused during February 1935 when the Premier, M. Tsaldares, and the War Minister, General Kondyles, declared that two machine-guns had arrived at the Canea custom house addressed to Venizelos by his son. There was no truth in the statement, but it served to arouse the hostility of the "right" who, anxious to turn the tables against their opponent, began a campaign demanding action against Venizelos, forgetting that it was themselves who were under judgment by public opinion. The situation was becoming steadily worse and Athens was again a city of rumours, reminiscent of the tragic days of 1916.

On the night of March 1, 1935, a military insurrection broke out in Athens. The regiment of Evzones was the first to revolt. After an ultimatum, loyal troops shelled the barracks, and the rebels yielded in the early hours of the morning, with a loss of three dead and twelve wounded. The cadets of the Evelpides Military College also showed signs of siding with the rebels, but were quickly overpowered by troops, who charged into the college and cleared out the officers in command, without any casualties. The "plot" had wider ramifications than the Government had envisaged when it issued the proclamation that "order

has been restored." Admiral Demestichas and Vice-Admiral Kollialexes seized the cruiser *Averov*, one light cruiser, two destroyers and a torpedo-boat for the mutineers. Instead of training their guns on Athens, where the issue was still undecided, the rebel officers steamed straight for Crete to enlist the support of Venizelos. In Salonika, General Panagiotakos, the garrison commander, called a meeting of all the officers, and arrested all those suspected of complicity in the plot, thus preventing the insurrection from spreading, but in Eastern Macedonia, General Kammenos held several cities, including Drama, Seres and Kavalla, for the rebels.

The insurrection came like a bombshell to the unsuspecting public, the more so, as it was considered entirely futile. There had been Press campaigns alleging conspiracies against the Republic by the Royalists, but any action by them was looked upon as unlikely. The people were tired of these perpetual coups. Many still had enormous confidence in Venizelos, but none could trust the militarists to safeguard civil liberties, and even in the places where the rebels held sway the people showed unmistakably their opposition to the new rulers.

A *coup d'état* can only succeed if it takes the authorities by surprise. For that reason, rapidity and co-ordination are essential. The March insurrection was badly organised and bore signs of amateurishness. How Venizelos came to associate himself with such a movement is a mystery, particularly after the surprise outbreak in Athens had been suppressed, and any further prolongation of the rebellion meant futile slaughter. It is possible that out of a sense of mistaken loyalty to friends he was persuaded to take up arms against a constitutionally elected Government. Many have cited the dastardly attack on him two years earlier as explaining the recklessness with which he sought to plunge the country into civil war. We have it on the authority of many participants in the rebellion that Venizelos was not privy to the movement. He only assumed its leadership after the rebel fleet arrived at Canea, on the pretext that the Government, by declaring martial law, had violated the Constitution, and was endangering the Republic (as if the mutineers were within their constitutional rights in staging an armed uprising!). After eleven

days the insurrection collapsed, and Venizelos escaped in the rebel cruiser *Aegean* with many of his followers to Kasos, an island of the Dodecanese in Italian possession, proceeding afterwards to Naples and then to Paris.

However much Venizelos has been criticised for choosing to close a long political career with such a violent adventure, the close student of Greek politics knows that the revolution was a necessity if the Republic was to be saved. The slow-moving, apathetic Prime Minister, M. Tsaldares, had given ample evidence of his desire to promote national unity, but not all those who supported his administration have been equally conciliatory, and the Venizelists had definite knowledge of movements afoot for eliminating them from the service of the State, as a prelude to a change of régime. Reaction, beaten down in 1924, was coming steadily to the surface, and Royalist centres in London and Paris were extremely active. These fears, however, were not shared by the people—or at least, if shared, were considered a thing of the future, not constituting an immediate danger—who were on the contrary made to believe that the insurrectionary movement was an aim to destroy Parliament, and put stratocracy in its place. A long and bitter memory of endless coups by disgruntled colonels and retired generals made them apprehensive, and it was their opposition which contributed more to the failure of the insurrection than General Kondyles's much advertised general offensive in Macedonia, which wasted itself upon an enemy already in flight.

Venizelos's active participation in the rebellion, however justified it might have appeared after the harsh treatment meted out to him, was a mistake. But what else could he do? He once remarked, with bitter sarcasm, that "everything which fails is a mistake." He preferred in this case to fail, knowing full well that he could not succeed in his purpose by leading an improvised revolutionary movement. He could do nothing else; choice between patriotism and loyalty to friends and supporters who risked their lives to serve his cause would have been difficult for any man, even if recent events had not destroyed his serene objective judgment and blurred his vision. Refusal to co-operate was not easy once the avalanche of revolution had

gathered momentum. Had he held aloof, not only would he have forfeited the trust of his supporters, but his enemies would have never been convinced of his innocence and would have insisted on his complicity as they did with the abortive insurrection of General Plasteras.

* * *

The rebellion had catastrophic consequences both for Venizelos and the Republic. It was ostensibly made to safeguard democracy, and it opened the way for the dictatorship of the Conservative Right. One thousand five hundred Liberal officers were removed from their army posts, three leaders of the "Republican Defence League" (Papoulas, Koimises and Volanes) were shot and their property confiscated, many Republican leaders were sentenced to imprisonment, and Venizelos was sentenced to death in his absence.

News of his sentence, when it reached him in Paris, filled him with anger and disgust. It is stated that for a whole week he was in a state of nervous excitement, boiling with indignation at a Government brave enough to sentence to death an exiled man and yet let his attackers go free. Still more terrible to him was the punishment which befell the rank and file of his supporters. The civil services were cleared of all Venizelists, along with the army and the navy. With his disappearance from the political scene the lesser lights of Greece could not curb the truculence of the conspirators. General Kondyles, who had declared in March that he was against the monarchy and had changed his mind in July and declared himself to be the "General Monk of the Greek restoration," on September 10, with the assistance of three officers representing the army, the navy and air force, deposed M. Tsaldares and suppressed the Republican Constitution. That afternoon the National Assembly found a new Government installed under the presidency of General Kondyles. M. Tsaldares walked out with his followers, who were the majority, whereupon the remaining Rump voted the abolition of the Republic, the restoration of the Monarchy, and the holding of a plebiscite to confirm it on November 3. Meanwhile General Kondyles appointed himself Regent. The plebiscite, according

to "official figures" showed a majority of 98 per cent. for the Monarchy.

The manner in which the plebiscite was conducted became the farce of Europe. Detachments of soldiers were marched from one polling station to another to register their votes. There were cases of privates voting as many as sixteen times. Low, in a celebrated cartoon in the *Evening Standard*, epitomised the elections with his typical humour. A bewildered peasant enters the polling station where he is confronted by three grim-looking men, one with fixed bayonet and two behind a machine-gun, covering the booth of the "Nayes," with the inscription, "These Greeks do their polling business so much better than we do. Instead of having to vote to get something, you get something you have to vote for."

Venizelos, from Paris, protested against this electoral farce, and threatened to return and "take an active interest in Greece" unless freedom was restored. The reply from Athens, made by the deputy M. Mavromichales, was to suggest the offer of a reward for anyone who carried out the death sentence upon the ex-Premier—a gesture hardly commendable in a civilised community! But the French Republic took the threat seriously and increased the police protection to safeguard Venizelos.

* * *

The rapid development of Greek affairs and the progressive triumph of reaction forced Venizelos to the conclusion that the interests of the country could be better served by a monarch standing above contending political parties. But he was extremely diffident about the impartiality or the administrative capacity of King George II, so overwhelmingly acclaimed by the "faked" plebiscite. Only after the unofficial intervention of the British Government was he persuaded to grant toleration to the restored King, the latter promising to abide by the Constitution. On his return, the King dismissed Kondyles, and showed signs that he intended to free himself from the influence of those who plotted his restoration. His resolute action in amnestying all those involved in the insurrection of the previous year, including Venizelos, won Venizelos's support: he waived every objection

he had against the Monarchy, and urged upon his followers to do the same, and help to promote national unity. On New Year's day, Venizelos and the King exchanged cordial greetings. Outwardly reconciliation was complete, and the King, who had returned apprehensive of the repercussions which his action might have had, found himself supported by the Liberals and consequently securely installed on the throne. The King's eventual betrayal of his oath by suppressing the Constitution and giving dictatorial powers to General Metaxas in no way belittles the action of Venizelos, who preferred to be governed by a Constitutional Monarch than by the unscrupulous military dictatorship of General Kondyles's type.

From afar, the Cretan again became the central figure of Greek politics. He declared categorically that he would never mix in politics, but no week passed without his writing letters to the Press or to his friends, in which he was urging unity and the preservation of the hard-won liberties of the people, in the face of tremendous international complications. He supported the Popular Front pact, negotiated by M. Sophoules with the Communist leader Sclavainas, as a further guarantee of democratic stability. This pact was later destroyed by the defection of the Liberal leaders, particularly of M. Gonatas and M. Caphandares. This split of the democratic forces and their consequent ineffectiveness contributed more than any other single factor to the dictatorship of General Metaxas.

It was with difficulty that Venizelos remained in Paris after his amnesty. He was longing for the sunshine and peace of his native land. Originally he planned to go to Crete in April 1936, but because he considered that the situation in Greece was not as yet normal, he postponed his return until June. In his correspondence with his friend M. J. Eliakes, who undertook to prepare his house, are reflected the last burning desires of an old man, but recently under the shadow of threatened assassination, longing to return and see his old home, wanting above everything else a familiar secluded spot to find that greatest of all happiness, rest. He arranged for the planting of flowers in his garden, for the pruning of his trees. Playing with pathetic melancholy upon the necessity which postponed his return, he wrote complaining that

he would not be able to eat plums and apricots from his garden, as his friend would eat them before his return.

A man without any hobbies outside politics, he could not long remain satisfied with the less turbulent preoccupation of arranging his domestic affairs. Politics were his life-force. He was perturbed by the Italo-Abyssinian war, as showing a new bellicose spirit emerging in Europe and as auguring a progressive degeneration of international relations. A speech by M. Titulescu following upon the remilitarisation of the Rhineland, in which he declared that the Balkan *entente* would stand by France against Germany, upset Venizelos, and strengthened his fears that Greece might be involved by her commitments through the Balkan Pact in central European entanglements. While M. Titulescu was in Paris, Venizelos had an interview with him in the presence of M. Herriot. He asked for further elucidations of M. Titulescu's attitude. The discussion which followed lasted for a considerable time and ended heatedly. Banging the table with his fist and talking excitedly, Venizelos said: "How do you dare, M. Titulescu, to involve Greece, a purely Mediterranean country, in extra-Balkanic complications? Whatever you may wish to do, I will never permit the destruction of a state, for the creation of which I have worked and suffered much." The same evening he wrote a long letter to Athens, warning the Liberals of the danger of possible Greek entanglements in engagements outside the Balkans in consequence of a pledge alleged to have been given at Geneva in June 1934 by M. Maximos, then Foreign Minister. After a brilliant survey of the international situation, he concluded that the danger to world peace at the moment lay with Germany, which was bent on a policy of Danubian and Eastern European expansion, and urged unity in order that Greece should be strong and united to determine her own attitude in face of any eventuality according to the merits of the case.

On the following morning, March 13, he granted an interview—his last—to a correspondent of the Paris *Intransigent*. "Unfortunately," Venizelos said, "we have gone back to pre-war conditions. Every country is faced with the necessity of arming itself as much and as fast as it can, and each is also faced with the necessity of concluding military alliances. The German Rhineland

coup has shown that no one can be certain any longer, either of his own security or of the peace of Europe, and that each has to rely on his own powers to maintain his independence. I was one of the founders of the League of Nations, but it has of late been demonstrated that no one can rely absolutely on that body to secure general peace." Turning to home affairs, Venizelos said, "I have set an example! My opponents demanded my irrevocable withdrawal from politics as the first condition of national conciliation. I have made that sacrifice for the future of my country, for the greatness of which I have dedicated my life." And he added, weighing every word, "It is necessary to make sacrifices to secure internal as well as external peace." These were the last words he spoke publicly.

The same evening the doctors ordered him complete rest. Five days later (March 18, 1936) the great Cretan breathed his last, in a foreign country. It is a sad reflection on Greek public life that the two greatest statesmen that modern Greece has produced in her century of existence, Tricoups and Venizelos, both died in exile. Their fate was singularly Greek. As M. Aspreas, the Greek historian, has remarked, "No Greek political leader has been justified by his contemporaries; one after the other descended into the grave with bitterness on his lips and sorrow in his heart."

Unforgiving partisanship forbade his body from being taken to Athens. But the whole of Greece paid its homage to the great man. It was reserved for Crete to show her sorrow, where every window was draped with crêpe—so great and so profound was the sorrow. A hundred Cretan warriors in their picturesque local costumes hauled the gun-carriage bearing his body up the slope of Prophites Elias, the scene of Venizelos's revolution thirty-nine years earlier, and there, under the pine trees, on the rugged brow of the mountain, looking over the silvery Cretan Sea, they buried the creator of modern Hellas.

APPENDIX

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1936-1941

DEFEAT AND HOPE

"Sick with famine:—Freedom, so
To what of Greece remaineth now
Returns; her hoary ruins glow
Like orient mountains lost in day;
Beneath the safety of her wings
Her renovated nurslings prey,
And in the naked lightnings
Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
Let freedom leave—where'er she flies,
A Desert or a Paradise:
Let the beautiful and the brave
Share her glory, or a grave."

("HELLAS"—Shelley.)

GREEK history follows inexorably the pattern of ancient Greek tragedy. Disaster and hope, defeat and victory follow one another in inevitable sequence. Once again, after 110 years of independence and after twenty years of the modern Greek State, Greece is under the heel of a foreign conqueror. But this episode, like those which have gone before it, is only an interlude. There is no finale! Whatever the Nazis and Fascists think or do, every Greek believes and knows with certainty that Greece will rise again. In times of liberty and freedom Greece becomes quarrelsome: the people are easily given over to intransigent partisanship: political life becomes fierce and obstinate: clash and conflict are the inevitable undertones to any Greek progress. Disaster unifies Greece, dissension disappears, and the whole nation stands embattled for its life, and like their forefathers, they prefer to fight and die against odds, rather than acquiesce

* * *

On that sunny March day in 1936 when a hundred old Cretan

warriors carried the coffin of Venizelos up the mountain slope to inter it on the Akrotiri promontory, a definite period of Greek history was interred along with it. Venizelos was a Liberal, indeed one of the last great Liberals of Europe. Whether in power, in opposition, or in exile, his personality dominated Greek politics. With his death, his supporters and Party, lacking his guidance, failed, and Liberalism died in Greece as in so many other European countries. But such has been the influence of the man that to-day his name—particularly in his native island of Crete—is becoming the rallying influence for a great section of the Greek people. Venizelos the revolutionary, more than Venizelos the statesman, is providing an undying inspiration to many of those who battle grimly against Nazi tyranny.

FROM DEMOCRACY TO DICTATORSHIP

The death of Venizelos proved an important turning-point in Greek affairs. The political situation, under the influence of lesser men, became confused, and indecision and procrastination at last led to the establishment of a dictatorship.

After the successful—rather over-successful—plebiscite conducted by General Kondyles for the restoration of the Monarchy the previous autumn, and the subsequent understanding reached between King George and Venizelos, it was thought that at long last a period of political tranquillity would set in; the personal feuds and bitter hostility between Venizelists and anti-Venizelists which had rended Greece for twenty years would be a thing of the past. As we have seen already, Venizelos accepted the restoration of the Monarchy after the King promised to respect the Constitution.

The day after the plebiscite the King—then resident in London—telegraphed a message to the people in which, among other things, he said: ". . . I bear no ill-will. I turn my back to the recent past to look towards the future. Relying on the affection of my people and the sincere help of all, I, as a faithful guardian of the régime, will devote all my strength to the realisation of our ideals. The motto of my ancestors shall be mine—'My strength lies in the love of my people'."

These sentiments found a warm echo. The King was coming back, not as a prisoner of a single political party, but as King of all the Hellenes. Further, the sudden *volte-face* of Venizelos strengthened considerably the belief amongst a people tired by this prolonged fruitless strife, that a new era was at hand and that Greece would be spared the evil of stratocracy in the future.

But the natural bewilderment caused by Venizelos's changed attitude compelled him to explain his views more fully. In a lengthy letter to the New York Greek paper *National Herald* (ΕΘΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΗΡΥΞ) he did so in detail, urging upon his followers to show tolerance to the Monarchy "for a trial period." This on two conditions. First, the entire restoration of constitutional liberty. Second, a general amnesty of all those involved in the March insurrection from which he himself was to be excluded in order to lessen the apprehension of his enemies. He expressed a fear that the intransigent attitude taken by certain Republicans would lead to the success of the Kondyles Royalist dictatorship as the only policy of keeping the King on the throne, and emphasised that such a policy based on the denial of liberty was very abhorrent to him. Such a policy would lead to the destruction of the State. He admitted that his policy of toleration would further help to obscure the fact that the King came to the throne by irregular means. "But even so," he proceeded, "I do not modify my conception of how we ought to act. Faced with the accomplished fact of the restoration, I wish with all my soul that the King will show himself a constitutional King."

The Liberals were faced with a dilemma: they had either to accept such a policy or, by being antagonistic, throw the King into the arms of the one or the other Royalist party "with all the calamities that would follow." Venizelos explained that he placed the greatest importance, not on whether the régime was a crowned democracy or a republic, but on the essential safeguarding of the liberties of the Greek people. A crowned democracy could assure those liberties.

Proceeding, Venizelos explained his position during the critical period of 1923-24 when the question of the Monarchy was raised in an acute form. Because of the uncompromising attitude of the various political leaders, Venizelos arranged for the plebiscite—

held on April 13, 1924—when the Monarchy was abolished, the results of which have been accepted by both Royalists and Republicans.

"When in December 1934," he continued, "I withdrew my objections to the military movement, I did so because I knew that the restoration, which was foreseen, aimed not at establishing a crowned democracy, but at creating an anti-Venizelist State, that is to say, at consolidating the dictatorship of the Government Parties in the shadow of the throne. The aim was to establish a crowned dictatorship like that which exists in Italy—with a difference for the worse." And in order that such a thing be averted, he urged his followers to accept the new régime and make it workable.

This was Venizelos's testament on the change of form of administration, expressing both his fears and his aspirations. It had a profound effect upon the Greek people. Once the chief antagonist was won over (or rather swung round), the position of the King became much easier and much stronger. Having the support of the political parties behind him, the King no longer felt obliged to rely on Kondyles, and, in fact, he soon found himself at loggerheads with him over the question of the granting of amnesty to political prisoners. The King wanted to carry through his part of the bargain with Venizelos, but Kondyles objected. The issue developed into a test of strength between them, with Kondyles organising demonstrations of his supporters before the palace and carrying on a critical campaign in the newspapers. Five days later Kondyles was dismissed and, after consultations with party leaders, the King delegated authority to Professor Demerdjes to form an extra-Parliamentary Government pending a general election.

Kondyles's dismissal enormously enhanced the reputation of the Monarch. It was greeted everywhere with relief, because Kondyles was hated as few men in Greece have ever been hated. Two months afterwards he died suddenly at his home while cleaning his teeth.

The results of the elections held at the end of January 1936 were as follows: Venizelists, 127; Tsaldares Popular Royalists, 69; Kondyles-Theotokes Royalist Coalition, 63; The Pan-Popular

Party (Communists), 15; Metaxas's Free Opinion Party, 7; Papanastassiou Workers-Agrarian, 4; Independent (Royalists), 5; Independent (Venizelists), 3. In all, 300 seats.

According to a rough grouping, the Venizelists secured 141 seats in the Chamber as against 144 of the Royalists. Fifteen seats, and along with them the balance of power, went to the Communists. (The above denomination of Royalists and Venizelists—implying anti-Royalists—is incorrect, as the question of Monarchy or Republic was not before the electorate. It is used here as a distinction in the strength of the various political parties.) It is obvious that under the circumstances, no party or group of parties of the one or the other camp could have the requisite majority to form a stable administration. The only solution would have been a coalition Government. There were no differences to speak of either of internal or external policy to make collaboration difficult or impossible. Yet both the principal parties maintained a curiously uncompromising attitude. Neither M. Sophoules (Liberal Leader) nor M. Tsaldares (Populist Leader) could agree to serve in a Government under the other. In fact, both made it plain that co-operation was impossible, as both claimed the right to form a Government—their own. The King, in an effort to find a solution, held a series of conferences of party leaders (from which the Pan-Popular Party (Communists) was excluded), but without results. Meanwhile, the extra-Parliamentary Government of M. Demerdjes, with Metaxas as Vice-Premier, continued in power.

Bickerings and division were further exacerbated by the prolonged and acrimonious discussions in the Chamber over the question of the reinstatement of amnesty Venizelist officers. The Liberals wanted their supporters back in the army. The Populists, on the other hand, acting under pressure from their own supporters in the army—many of whom got quick promotions following upon the widespread dismissals of the previous year—were adamant in their opposition. They remained equally adamant to the demand of the Liberals for the abolition of the Special Service Security Police which had become a miniature Gestapo.

While the situation was thus degenerating into confusion, the

Pan-Popular Party (Communists) signed an agreement with the Liberals, promising their support to the latter in the formation of a Government, provided that Government was prepared to carry on an agreed measure of reform. These reforms included labour legislation, increased allowance for the workless and generally the adoption of measures for the amelioration of the hard lot of the Greek workers and peasants. In fairness to the Communists it must be said that they strove to reach an agreement with the Populists too, but without success, although preliminary conversations did take place between them. The Liberal-Communist agreement, which would have given Greece a Parliamentary Government, remained inoperative, and was denounced later on by the Liberal leaders themselves.

The death of Venizelos created further confusion among the Liberals. Even the pretence of talks and explorations for resolving the Parliamentary deadlock was not kept up. On April 13, 1936, Premier Demerdjes died, and the King in the absence of an agreement for an alternative Government, asked Metaxas to form a Government. But Metaxas was a member of the Assembly, where he had six other deputies; how could he possibly lead an extra-Parliamentary Government? (When appointed to the Vice-Premiership in December, he was not a member of the Assembly.) Tsaldares, who was by no means an opponent of Metaxas, characterised the new Government as "neither extra-Parliamentary nor Parliamentary, neither neutral nor a Service Cabinet." He did not oppose it, however, and neither did Sophoules. A month later Tsaldares died and his followers, under M. Vozikes, lost their cohesion as a party, and some of them began to approach other parties with a view to fresh political realignments.

Such was the indescribable Parliamentary confusion, the fluidity of the parties, and, at the same time, the inherent enmity among them, that during May and June 1936, the situation appeared both insoluble and hopeless.

During May two important things took place which directly helped to determine the future form of the Greek régime.
(a) After a short discussion, Parliament authorised the Service Cabinet of General Metaxas to govern by decree for five months,

subject to the approval of a standing Parliamentary Committee. This solution, which short-circuited the deadlock, put with one single stroke the executive above Parliamentary control. In so doing, Parliament admitted its inability to resolve its quarrels and govern. It signed its death warrant. (b) The strike of the Salonika workers for higher wages, which developed into a local general strike. *Gendarmerie* and armoured cars were sent against the strikers—before even the possibilities of agreement were exhausted—and in the ensuing clashes, over a score of workers were killed and almost two hundred wounded. This event had widespread repercussions throughout Greece. Metaxas's dictatorial tendencies were becoming apparent and the opposition against his Government grew proportionately stronger.

The Premier was now at the cross-roads. Having been granted enormous powers by the Assembly and having made himself unpopular by his Salonika action, he was left with only two possible courses of action. Either he had to yield to pressure and relinquish office, or go to extremes and establish an authoritative Government. No middle course was possible.

From then onwards, events followed with calamitous rapidity. In June 1936 Dr. Schacht visited Athens for the ostensible purpose of liquidating 32 million Reich Marks of Greek credits frozen in Germany. For some time previously, particularly since the adoption of the Imperial Preferential Tariff by Great Britain and the import duties imposed by the U.S.A., a number of Greek raw materials had found a market in Germany. The same applied to all the other countries of South-eastern Europe. Sanctions against Italy increased the value of the German market to Balkan exporters. So by 1936, Greece had a substantial credit in Germany which could only be redeemed by buying in bigger quantities on the German market.

Schacht used Germany's position in an adroit, gangster fashion. This is how he dealt with Metaxas. "Greece and Germany can become friends. We owe you some money which we cannot pay. We can pay you only if you are prepared to buy our goods. Greece needs arms. We have a plentiful supply of arms. We agree to provide you with arms to wipe off our debt, provided you agree to send us more materials and enter into a

barter agreement with us. We cannot pay in gold, but in goods. This is our position—take it or leave it!" The German blackmail succeeded, Metaxas accepted the offer and the deal was closed.

The Greco-German economic understanding produced consternation among the Liberal-Venizelists, who, traditionally pro-British, saw in this new move of the Premier's a definite attempt to reorientate Greek policy towards Germany. They remembered Metaxas's attitude during the first war and became apprehensive lest Greece should forgo her old friendships and begin befriending the German tiger. This danger was particularly sensed by the working masses, with their strong anti-Fascist traditions, and they came out openly and vigorously against this move. Action was called for in order to replace the Government with a Parliamentary one. The Liberals and the Royalists, particularly the rank and file, and along with them many M.P.s were becoming increasingly fearful of the Premier's policy. The signs were unmistakable. Something was afoot. Considerable changes of district governors, police chiefs, and military commands were taking place which augured no good. Consequently, the Liberals and the Theotokes Royalist Party—the second largest Royalist Party in the Assembly—drew together with the purpose, expressed in their own words, "to contribute to the effort to give the country Parliamentary Government"! Talks began well and substantial progress was made. But while these talks were still in progress Metaxas released a new thunderbolt in the form of a decree imposing compulsory arbitration in labour disputes and Government intervention in the administration of trade union funds. This decree was interpreted by the trade unionists as a mortal blow to their rights, organisation, and interests, and they decided to hit back. A 24-hour general strike was proclaimed to take place throughout Greece on August 5.

Metaxas, beset by the agreement of the Liberals and Populists, decided that he had very little time in which to act. The call for the 24-hour general strike was grasped both as an excuse and an opportunity. He timed his action in order to forestall the mass strike, which was to have commenced at midnight on August 4. During the same evening emergency decrees were published, proclaiming martial law throughout the country and calling to

the colours workers of all essential services, particularly transport, electricity, bakers, etc. Troops took immediate control of Athens and other important towns and occupied the Houses of Parliament, trade union buildings, newspaper offices, banks and the power stations. Cavalry detachments patrolled the streets. Police and *gendarmerie* swooped upon the opponents of the régime and a considerable number of arrests were made. Many people were arrested early in the evening in cafés, theatres and in the streets, among them some of the best known politicians and men of letters of Greece.

The following day the world was informed that Greek Parliamentary democracy was dead; that the Constitution was abolished and that Metaxas had assumed the reins of power. In his proclamation, Metaxas made as the excuse of his action the "menace of communism" and Parliament's "manifest incapacity" to give the country an efficient Government. Dictatorship was now established in Greece.

THE DICTATORSHIP

The stages of Metaxas's rise to dictatorial power have been traced rather fully, as otherwise many subsequent developments, as well as present-day happenings in Greece, might have remained obscure.

Indeed, Metaxas is now a great name—or rather his memory is great—among the people of Europe who are struggling for liberty. The successes of the Greek army in Epirus against the Italians in the autumn and winter of 1940–41 were linked with his name as the responsible leader of Greece. To him belongs the honour of inflicting the first serious reverses upon the junior member of the Rome-Berlin gangster partnership.

But whatever the ultimate estimation of Metaxas by history and the appraisal of his rôle in the present world conflict, one cannot completely ignore what had previously taken place. His rule from August 1936 up to the outbreak of the Greco-Italian war was autocratic, and like all régimes that place themselves above the restraining influences of popular control, was characterised by excesses and unnecessary pain and suffering.

At the very outset, the Greek dictatorship attempted to stamp out the anti-Fascist movement. Communists, Agrarians, Trade Union leaders and Left Liberals were the first to be rounded up. In a few weeks over 6,000 political prisoners were in jail or in exile. Apparently, the work of eliminating opponents was so thorough that Dr. Goebbels, visiting Athens in September of the same year, congratulated the Government on the suppression of the Left Movement and thus "rendering great service to the civilised world. I do not disclose any secret," he proceeded, "in saying that we German Nationalists were glad." Once on the path of absolutism, the administration made strenuous efforts to be thorough. Liberals, Populists and even extreme Royalists like M. Theotokes, Generals like Tsangarides and Gonatas, along with recalcitrant ex-associates of Metaxas, were sent to prison or into exile. Books were publicly burned. The classics were expurgated to accord with the prevalent conceptions of totalitarianism. All these measures had considerable repercussions among the people of the Western democracies and were interpreted as indications that Greece was moving away from the Anglo-French orbit to that of Germany. These interpretations were not entirely unfounded, for during the three years before the war German propaganda in Greece was very widespread. In addition, Greece was economically tied to Germany, and as is usual, economic influence went hand in hand with political influence. But though Metaxas tried to follow in the footsteps of the Nazis as regards internal administration, he never by written or spoken word revealed where his sympathies lay.

His régime was intensely unpopular. The Greeks felt this denial of their liberty very deeply and struck back in countless ways in striving to regain it. Conspiracy after so-called conspiracy was unearthed every now and then by the Security Police and further batches of prisoners were sent into exile. Although the Greeks, like some other nations, had had only the shadow of democracy without its substance, its complete obliteration, the destruction of the political parties and of the Labour associations, were insufferable to them.

In foreign affairs Metaxas was an enigma. He strove to cultivate the friendship of all his neighbours and to be on good terms

with the Great Powers of Europe. But, like so many other politicians of Central and Western Europe at the time, he deliberately excluded the Soviet Union. Above all, he strove to maintain good relations with Italy, which represented by far the greatest danger to Greek independence. But this elastic and all-inclusive policy of general friendship, real or camouflaged, was not without its risks. Firstly, it ignored the progressive deterioration of general European relations and the efforts of the democratic states to create a Peace Front, calculated to arrest and/or resist aggression. The small states, by their fluid, equivocal attitude, must bear a proportional share of the abysmal failure of the Western democracies to organise such a front before hostilities began. Secondly, this policy contributed to the breakdown of the "Balkan *entente*" entered into by Turkey, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Greece in 1934, for the purpose of Balkan defence. Metaxas of Greece and Stoyadinovich of Yugoslavia, on account of their indefinite foreign policies, greatly helped to undermine the *entente*.

Whatever the follies and the evils of Metaxas's dictatorship, he at least saw the necessity of reorganising and equipping the army, and developed it into a potent, defensive weapon, armed with the supplies sent from Germany. The irony of it is that the German arms, sold to a "friendly" Greece, were later used very effectively against Hitler's Italian allies in Albania.

In spite of his scarcely concealed German sympathies, and his efforts to make Greece a Fascist State, Metaxas was, above all, a Greek patriot. When the time came, he was not found lacking in vigour and determination to defend the independence of his country. It was as a fighting patriot, audaciously defying the cowardly might of Mussolini's Italy, that he was acclaimed by free Europe on his death.

THE WAR

The spring of 1939 saw the clouds of war darkening over Europe. Hitler's annexation of Bohemia and Moravia in March and Mussolini's conquest of Albania ended the tragic period of appeasement, and revealed that war was now inevitable. As Hitler's drive appeared to threaten Rumania and Mussolini's

conquest directly threatened Greece, the British and French Governments, acting in unison, made a declaration on April 13, 1939, guaranteeing the integrity and independence both of Greece and Rumania. Neither state had asked for that guarantee, but the fact that it was given was greatly appreciated by the Greek people, who welcomed it enthusiastically. The Government, however, remained silent. Following upon this guarantee, London tried to improve its relations with Athens, and on July 12, 1939, an agreement was signed in London whereby Great Britain gave Greece credits for the purchase of goods to the value of more than £2,000,000, with the purpose of reducing Greece's economic dependence on Germany.

With the declaration of war in September, the Greek Government, feeling itself not immediately threatened, declared their neutrality. To all intents and purposes, the Greek Government were sincere in their policy of neutrality and pursued that policy without deviation and with commendable honesty. They maintained a correct attitude towards the belligerents—the Press was not allowed to comment on world affairs, only to report them—and attempted to establish friendly relations with Italy as these had been strained since Italy's occupation of Albania. Notes exchanged between the Greek Prime Minister, Metaxas, and the Italian Minister at Athens, Signor Grazzi, on October 30, 1939, reaffirmed the principles embodied in the Italo-Greek Pact of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement signed by Venizelos and Mussolini eleven years earlier. The Stefani News Agency circulated rumours at the time that the two countries were contemplating an alliance. Evidently, in Italian eyes, an Italo-Greek alliance would have provided the stepping-stone for the long sought Italian hegemony over the Balkans.

Early in 1940 Great Britain and Greece signed a "War Trade Agreement," further enabling Greece to shake off the economic grip of Germany. The Greek people sincerely believed that the war would leave them untouched. The Government's policy and its tactfulness were impeccable. Enormous pains were taken not to antagonise any of the belligerents or even any of the neutral states. With Germany, relations were correct if not cordial, with Italy friendship was established and the old bonds with Britain

strengthened. No one made any claims on her inconsistent with her sovereignty.

But the inexorable fury of the war of conquest waged by the Nazis soon put an end to these false beliefs in security. The law of force and violence was established in Europe and no one was to be left untouched. Methodically and with calculated thoroughness and treachery, the Nazis began to reduce Northern Europe. Then they threw the enormous weight of their deadly military machine against the Low Countries and France. Once these countries were crushed, the Nazis and their allies began to turn to South-eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

When the German attack was delivered in the West, Italy, still neutral, hastened to give assurances (May 10, 1940) to Greece and Yugoslavia that she had no aggressive intentions against them. Mussolini, thus assured of the neutrality of the Balkans, summoned sufficient courage to stab a prostrate and bleeding France in the back and plunge the hapless Italian people into war. On the same day as the Italian declaration of war (June 10, 1940) Mussolini, speaking from the Palazzo Venezia, solemnly declared that "Italy had no intention of dragging into conflict other nations who are her neighbours by sea or by land. Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey and Egypt, should take care of these words. On them and only on them it depended whether these promises should be maintained or not."

Mussolini, playing the noble role of hyena to the German lion, was not satisfied with the meagre share left him from the carcass of France. He wanted to do a little conquering of his own in order to raise his prestige and make himself equal with the German Cæsar. He turned his attention to Greece, the subjugation of which he regarded as opening the gateway to "a new Roman Empire."

With characteristic Fascist clumsiness, he launched a terrific Press campaign against Greece early in August 1940, accusing the Greek Government of complicity in the murder of Daut Hodja (an Albanian) and of maltreating the Albanian population of the Province of Thesprotia or Tzamouria. Such was the violence of the Italian campaign that it was universally accepted as a prelude to an Italian attack.

The Greek Government answered the Italian accusations coolly and objectively. Daut Hodja, an Albanian hireling of Italy and a notorious brigand, had been murdered on Albanian territory by two of his compatriots in June 1940. The culprits later escaped to Greece. There they confessed and were at once taken into custody and the Greek Government communicated with the Italian Minister, requesting the Italian Government to take charge of the two murderers. The Italian Minister replied in July that an application for their extradition would soon be made, but the Italian Press meanwhile launched its campaign against Greece. In communicating with Italy, the Greek Government acted in accordance with the provisions and the spirit of the Greco-Italian Pact of Friendship. The Italians accused the Greeks of maltreating the population of Thesprotia which they claimed was wholly Albanian. In a statement on August 14, 1940, the official Greek Agency refuted the Italian contention. Out of the 65,000 inhabitants of Thesprotia, slightly more than 18,000 were Albanian Moslems. The remainder were Greek, although a good number of them were speaking, or could speak Albanian, a not unusual instance of bi-lingualism among frontier people, or people inhabiting areas constituted of composite nationalities. It further stated that the same thing could be said about the famous island of Hydra and of some Greek towns, where a good number of people speak a corrupted Albanian. According to this kind of logic, Italy might demand protection over them, too!

On August 15, an Italian submarine treacherously attacked and sank the Greek cruiser *Elli* while at anchor in the harbour of the island of Tinos. It was established by experts who examined the fragments of the torpedo that it was of Italian origin. Yet the Greek Government, unwilling to precipitate a war with Italy, withheld the experts' report and attributed the sinking of the *Elli* to an "unknown submarine."

Only a miracle could now have averted the war. The Italian Press campaign worked itself into a crescendo, preparing the Italian people for a Balkan war. On October 4, Hitler and Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass to decide Germany's Balkan strategy. The Balkans were earmarked for conquest. Hitler

would grasp Rumania and Mussolini Greece. In the following weeks, Rumania came *de facto* under German control, but Mussolini, seeing that his campaign of nerves had failed to break Greece, decided to solve the problem by direct action. Early in the morning of October 28, Italy invaded Greece.

The story of the Italian ultimatum is one of the most extraordinary in history, and the following account of it comes from General Metaxas himself. In the early hours of the morning, he was called to the telephone at his country house some distance outside Athens. "This is the French Minister," said the voice at the other end, "and I must see you at once."

Metaxas, puzzled, answered that he would receive the French representative, and a little later he opened the front door himself—his servants were in bed—to find to his astonishment that the Italian Minister, Signor Grazzi, was outside, and had for some reason, or because he lacked moral courage, used this trick to mislead Metaxas. The Italian then delivered the ultimatum, demanding the occupation of strategic points—not specified—by Italian forces, saying that if this was not accepted, Italian troops would cross the frontier into Greek territory at 6 a.m. It was then 3 a.m. After a short and heated discussion, Metaxas told the Italian Minister that he would under no circumstances accept the ultimatum or give the Italian troops free passage.

"This is war," he concluded and shut the door in his visitor's face.

Three hours later Italian troops crossed the frontier, where small detachments of Greek troops, guarding the Epirotic outposts, threw themselves with sacrificial abandon against the invader.

The spectacle of small Greece, defying with such audacity the might of an Italy six times larger than herself, electrified the world. The Italian armies of Graziani were in Sidi Barrani threatening Egypt. Half of Europe was under the heel of Germany. Rumania had capitulated without offering any resistance. Britain, battered mercilessly by Goering's air armada, was at bay. Under such conditions, Greece's defiance and her determination to fight, were seen as glorious, suicidal folly.

The invasion united the Greek people. Divisions were thrown

aside in patriotic fervour to resist this cowardly, wanton aggression.

Treachery and weight of metal gave the Italians some initial successes. They moved in two directions—eastward towards Florina in the direction of Salonika and southwards towards Jannina. In a few days they reached the Kalamas river, their advance being resisted fiercely by Greek troops. From there they were threatening to turn the left wing of the Greek army and open the road eastwards to Thessaly. But by that time the Greek army was mobilised and a desperate counter-attack was made against the Italians. Such was the courage and the élan of the Greek soldiers that the Italian army was definitely halted. Following this success, the Greek army, by a series of brilliant tactical moves, began to trap the Italians, cut off their units and force them steadily backwards. On November 6, considerable Italian forces were trapped in the inhospitable gorges of the Pindus Mountains. Four days later, a crack Alpine division was routed in Sarandaporon, and a general Italian retreat towards the frontier began. By November 23, the last remaining Italian units on Greek soil were driven across the frontier. Fighting on mountainous territory and in bitterly cold weather, the Greek forces maintained the offensive, pushing the enemy steadily backwards. Korytza was captured; the important Italian post and supply depot of Santi Quaranta was captured on December 6, and the important town of Argyrokastro on December 8. Before the end of the month, Himara and Klisura were in Greek hands.

These staggering successes of the Greek army, coupled with the brilliant advance of Wavell's troops in Libya, gave Italy a rude awakening. In vain Mussolini sought to arrest the progressive rout of his armies. He began dismissing his generals and changing his commands. Further reinforcements were sent to Albania, among them some of the crack Italian units. But do what they would, the Italian army could not stop retreating. In every engagement they were beaten by the superior qualities of the Greek soldiers—among whom the Evzones and the Cretan Regiments distinguished themselves—who were inspired by patriotic fervour and were capable in this mood of any sacrifice.

and any amount of hardship. The Italians were also beaten by superior generalship.

Throughout the winter months in snow and blizzards and in temperatures well below zero, the battle raged with undiminished intensity. The Italians were dislodged from one mountain stronghold after another, often at the point of the bayonet. Mussolini hastened to the front to bolster up the morale of his troops, but the Italian soldier had tasted defeat and could not help running backwards. By early spring, the Greek advance was threatening the important naval port and supply base of Valona.

On January 29, 1941, John Metaxas, who, along with General Papagos, was mainly responsible for the Albanian campaign, died in Athens and the banker Koryzes became Premier. But while the Greek army was pushing steadily forward towards the centre of Albania and pressing the Italians back to the sea, a greater danger began to loom in the north—the menace of Nazi Germany. Hitler, once established in Rumania, began to turn the screws on Bulgaria which, after some feeble efforts to preserve its independence, yielded to German pressure and signed the Axis Pact in Vienna on March 1. The German army was now on the Macedonian frontiers, but although the danger was overwhelming, the Greek Government declared that they would not yield, but fight on.

The new danger, instead of damping the ardour of the Greek people, helped to inflame it. Vlachos, the editor of *Kathimerini*, in a stirring article on March 8, asked Hitler what military honours did he expect to win from fighting a Greece of seven million people, already deeply involved in Albania. How would his soldiers feel if Greece would send to Macedonia 50,000 maimed soldiers—the legless, the blind, those without arms, and all those wounded in Albania, the whole 50,000 of them—as a demonstration of her helplessness to cope with the new enemy. Would they kill and destroy the helpless wounded and march on to conquest? But the Nazi tyrant could not be restrained by such pleas to human feelings. Like a boa constrictor, he began his murderous embrace of Yugoslavia, and on March 25, the Yugoslav Government of Prince Paul yielded. But the brave Yugoslav

people rose against their treacherous Government and kicked it out of office two days later. "Yugoslavia," as Mr. Churchill said in the House of Commons, "has found her soul."

Greece, facing the most crucial threat to her existence as a nation, appealed to Britain for assistance. Already enormous help had been given to Greece by Britain, particularly in planes and war materials. But now the demand was for men. So over sixty thousand British and Imperial troops were sent to Greece to fight the invader.

On April 6, the Germans threw their mechanised hordes in a powerful assault against Yugoslavia and Greece. Belgrade was bombed pitilessly and such was the staggering weight of the German attack that Yugoslavia went under within a few days. The Germans crashed over the mountains of lower Serbia and linked up with the Italians in Albania within six days of their attack.

Greece sent what forces she could spare to defend Macedonia. Although the soldiers were going to certain death, they went proudly, and with their heads held high. The defenders of the Roupel Pass took the Holy Sacrament before battle and, ill-armed as they were, held their position against repeated vicious German attacks for several days, until practically all of them were killed. In many an area in Macedonia the Greek troops fought to the last with a heroism that has become epic.

But the sudden collapse of the Yugoslav resistance in Macedonia enabled the Germans to pour through the Monastir gap and capture Salonika. One wing of the German army swung round to encircle the Greek troops in Macedonia and Thrace, while the other moved forward to the south to engage the Imperial and British forces deployed on Mount Olympus. By an encircling move the Germans compelled the British forces to retire—April 12—to new positions. Although the British troops fought with valour and tenacity, such was the speed of the German attack and their overwhelming superiority in mechanised power, that they were compelled to yield ground. On April 15 the Greek High Command announced withdrawal from Korytza. The split between the British and Greek armies effected by the German occupation of the Olympus range enabled the latter to

march over the Metsovo Pass and threaten the rear of the Greek army retiring from Albania. Facing complete encirclement, the Greek armies in Epirus surrendered on April 22. Meanwhile, the British and Imperial forces were being withdrawn and by the end of the month, almost the whole of Greece fell under the Nazi jackboot.

When the Germans were in Lamia and the threat to Athens was grave, the Athenian people—mostly youngsters and old men who were left behind—demonstrated in their thousands before the Royal Palace, demanding arms to fight the invader. But there were no arms to be had!

Along with the Greek mainland, all the Greek islands were occupied with the exception of Crete, where King George and his new Premier, M. Tsouderos (Koryzes committed suicide on April 18, after his suggestion for an armistice between the Greeks and the Germans was opposed by the King and the British Command), and other members of the Government took refuge. Crete was occupied at the outset of the Greco-Italian war by Britain and proved invaluable as a base for land and sea operations against the Italians in the Central Mediterranean.

Crete was considered impregnable to any sea-borne invasion, but on May 20, the Germans launched a persistent and extremely heavy air attack. The aerodrome of Maleme, close to the important naval base of Suda Bay, was captured by parachutists. Previous to that the British High Command withdrew its aircraft from Crete—a move which ultimately proved to be a great strategic blunder. Once the aerodrome had fallen into German hands, the Nazis used it as a base for pouring in an endless stream of air-borne troops, and they pressed home their attack irrespective of losses. They paid heavily indeed for their initial successes, but they succeeded in constantly bringing up new reinforcements and eventually gained the upper hand.

The Cretan and Imperial troops resisted fiercely. Civilians, women as well as men, joined in the hunting down and destruction of parachutists who were being dropped all over the island. The town of Rhethymne was cleared of parachutists by the townspeople themselves and in this the women played an important rôle. The defenders fought like heroes, but could not prevail

against the German Messerschmitts and dive bombers. Over ten thousand German troops were slain. Only in the present campaign against the Soviet Union have the Germans been opposed with greater tenacity and their relative proportional losses been higher. But Crete was the first place for whose conquest the Nazis had to pay a full price in blood.

The united resistance of the people infuriated the Germans so much that after they won control of the island—June 2, 1940—they wreaked vengeance both against soldiers and civilians. All civilians accused of bearing arms against the invader—including women—were brought before summary courts-martial and many of them were shot. But what was even worse was the free rein given to 15,000 Italian prisoners taken in Albania, thence transported to Crete and released by the Germans. The licentious Italian soldiery had heavy scores to pay off against the people whose soldiers had given them such a battering. For weeks they turned the island into a hell of wantonness, raping, killing, beating up innocent people and indulging in all forms of base and brutal orgies. People who escaped from the island speak of indescribable horrors and a degree of brutality that has not been heard of since the Middle Ages. The Cretans suffered grievously. They sustained the full wrath and malignancy of the German and Italian conquerors. But what the released Italian prisoners did is one of the blackest and starest pages of contemporary history. A forest of gallows will be required some day to expiate this crime.

THE AFTERMATH

Militarily the Germans have conquered Greece. Politically they have won a Pyrrhic victory. Except for a small section of pro-German Quislings—including the leader of the Epirus Army, General Tsolakoglu, and some members of the dictatorship—the whole people are united in bitter hostility against the invaders.

Slavery opened up a new chapter—the chapter of unity and of struggle, merciless and unremitting, for the liberation of Greece. The open battle has been transformed into the secret, implacable, elusive battle of the guerrilla and the saboteur. The people are determined to give the invader no respite. The resistance of the

Soviet Union, the spectacle of its stupendous sacrifice and achievements, the mauling it has given the German army, has given new hope to the enslaved peoples of Europe. The revolutionary battle has become intensified and throughout Europe the forces of liberty, with the dagger, the pistol, or dynamite, are striking at the vitals of Nazi power.

The entry of Italian troops into Athens was greeted with boos and catcalls by the Athenians. Italian and German soldiers, roaming about in the dark, either singly or in small groups, had a habit of disappearing. As a result, a strict curfew was enforced to keep the people indoors. Darkness is the great enemy of the conquerors. The Swastika has been repeatedly torn from the Acropolis. The Axis Press has been complaining that the Greeks refuse to co-operate. Harsher terror, greater repression and executions have been applied as a remedy, but there have been no signs of co-operation. In Crete armed detachments which had escaped to the mountains—the traditional road to freedom that has been trodden by countless generations of warriors previously—have been harassing the enemy. In an audacious attack in broad daylight in the summer, Cretan guerrillas, under the leadership of the old friend of Venizelos, General Manoles Mandakas, surprised a German court-martial and took the Germans to the mountains as prisoners and hostages. Events in Crete assumed such proportions that the Germans had to send the Quisling Vice-Premier Logothetopoulos to pacify the Cretans. But the visit, as could only have been expected, helped to arouse even more the hostility of the Cretans. Many of the veterans of Venizelos's revolutions are now, after forty years, leading the fight once more for the liberty of Crete.

At the beginning of the occupation, resistance to the enemy was spasmodic and unorganised. It was chiefly directed by Communist units and trade unions. But gradually the struggle broadened. Communists, Venizelists, Royalists, not only co-operated, but fused their activities and centralised their directions. A broad "national front" has been built up. While King George and the Greek Government in London represent Greece and remain the symbols of Greek independence, the people of Greece have taken upon their shoulders the task of purging their land of

the Axis occupants. Munition ships have been blown up in Piræus; other ships have been sunk by sabotage in Salonika; trains have been derailed, killing hundreds of enemy troops; munition factories destroyed, and in countless other ways, telling blows have been delivered against the German power. In the fastnesses of the Morea Mountains, in Epirus and Macedonia, the indomitable guerrillas are taking steady toll of the invader. These activities, widespread and persistent, immobilise a great number of Axis forces and are contributing towards the sapping of their morale.

The pall of darkness that has descended over Greece has not allowed full information to leak out as to what goes on. But judging by the numbers of hangings and shootings that the Germans admit, one can deduce the extent of resistance and revolt. The sombre and tragic mounting list of people murdered in cold blood, either accused as culprits or as hostages, is a testimony to the undying valour of Greece. In October 1941 a revolution broke out in Eastern Macedonia in which Greeks and Bulgarians co-operated. A number of towns and villages were liberated and the headquarters of the Provisional Government were established in the town of Drama. From there an appeal was issued to all the Balkan peoples and Governments to federate and offer united resistance to the aggressors. It is noteworthy that three Greeks and three Bulgars constituted the Provisional Revolutionary Government. But the Boris (Bulgarian) Government sent a whole army corps against the revolutionaries, which, assisted by German Stukas and bombers, suppressed the revolution after hard fighting lasting for days. It is reported that 5,000 people were slaughtered by the Bulgarian forces of pacification! The Bulgarian rulers, by their actions, are sowing the dragon's teeth of retribution and making divisions of blood between themselves and the hapless peoples over whom they tyrannise, acting as gaolers for their Nazi masters.

The Macedonian uprising is the first major upheaval that has occurred in conquered Greece. Its suppression did not produce the terror that was intended, but, instead, it kindled hatred and anger. The movement for independence is bound to grow, and although the road to liberty will be strewn with the bodies of fighting heroes and of murdered civilians, Greece will be free.

What has the German occupation brought to Greece? Terror, brutality, murder and famine. The meagre products of the country, insufficient to feed the people, are being confiscated for the use of the foreign armies on Greek soil. Real famine exists. There is an absolute scarcity of all essential necessities. The ration of bread allowed to each individual is one-third of the pre-war consumption. Neutral sources have reported that in Athens and Piræus alone, an average of one hundred persons die weekly from hunger or the results of hunger. Privation helps to spread the scourge of consumption at an alarming rate.

Hunger and slaughter are the twin evils that the German conquest has brought in its trail. This is the goal that Nazism ultimately leads to. The Greek people are being sacrificed in hecatombs at the altar of the Nazi Moloch.

But whatever the terror and the sufferings, whatever the tortures and the outrages, the spirit of the people remains and will remain unbroken. They are fighting grimly against an immensely strong tyranny, but they do not despair. They are confident that they will win in the end—they are already making, in numerous ways, a substantial contribution to the Allied struggle—and know that by the side of Britain, the Soviet Union and the U.S.A. they will ultimately be victorious, whatever the volume of sacrifice may be.

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INDEX

- A**bbott, G. F., 257
Abdul Hamid, 21, 25, 31.
Abdullah Pasha, 25.
Aboubeikr, 89.
Aehrenthal, Count von, 134.
Aga Khan, 209.
Alexander, Crown Prince, 107, 176
Alexander, King, 200, 203.
Alexander, Prince, of Battenberg, 13.
Alexander, the Macedon, 262.
Andrew, Prince, 257.
Argyropoulos, P., 170
Aristotle, 88.
Aspreas, 274
- B**alkan Alliance, 82, 102
entente, 273, 285.
League, 5, 102, 113, 126
Pact, 266, 273.
Baltazzi, G., 226.
Benakes, 133.
Benazet, 174.
Boris, Prince, 109
Bosdari, Count, 158.
Bourchier, J. D., 97
Bristol, Admiral, 193
- C**laclamanos, D., 26, 155, 224, 227,
229, 240.
Calogeropoulos, 173, 208, 210.
Caphandares, 237, 240-2, 254, 272.
Carol, King, 123-4.
Catelouzou, Maria, 10.
Cavenaro, Admiral, 29, 34
Chamberlain, Joseph, 14-15, 17-18
Christopher, Prince, 257.
Churchill, Winston, 152, 191, 200,
292.
Clemenceau, 3, 183, 187, 260.
Cleon, 88.
Congress of Berlin, 58.
Constantine, Crown Prince, 90,
108-9, 114.
Constantine, King, 55, 117, 124, 125,
131, 135, 141, 154, 159, 163, 168,
170, 175-6, 204, 206, 259.
Cosmetatos, 257.
- Countouriotes, Admiral, 111, 153,
170-1, 203, 234, 243.
Curzon, Lord, 217, 219, 222, 224,
226.
Cyprus, 6, 107, 136, 165, 179, 201,
250-1, 253.
Cyril, Prince, 109.
- D**anev, Dr., 118-9.
Dangles, General, 171, 185, 210.
Daut Hodja, 287-8.
Delcassé, 156, 159.
Delegiannes, 19.
Demerdjes, 278-80.
Demestichas, Admiral, 268.
Diamandy, 228.
Dillon, Dr., 63, 129.
Disraeli, 196.
Dousmanes, General, 147.
Dragoumes, 66, 76, 154.
Dragourmes, Jon, 203.
- E**gerton, Colonel, 29.
Elakas, M. J., 44, 272.
Enver Bey, 94, 110, 123, 137, 186
d'Esperey, General Franchet, 185.
- F**erdinand, Tsar, 118, 122, 123, 146.
Ferdinand, Prince, 58.
Foch, Marshal, 199, 207.
Fournet, Admiral Dartige du, 173-4.
Franklin-Bouillon, 217.
Franz Joseph, Emperor, 116.
- G**abrielides, Vlasis, 50.
Galopoulos, 244.
Garezos, 264
Garibaldi, 113
George, Prince, 1, 28, 37, 39, 41-53,
55, 85-6, 159, 204.
George I, King, 59, 77-8, 86, 109,
116-7.
George II, King, 226, 233-4, 271,
276, 278, 293, 295.
Ghalib Bey, 105.
Giannares, Professor Antonios, 46.

- Gibbons, H. A., 56.
 Giolitti, 98, 112-3.
 Glinoz, M., 261.
 Goebbels, Dr., 284.
 Goering, H., 289.
 Gonatas, Colonel, 220, 230.
 General, 251, 272, 284.
 Goudas, Admiral, 160, 226.
 Gounares, D., 154, 158-161, 208,
 210, 213, 218, 226
 Graziani, 289.
 Grazzi, 286, 289.
Great Idea (*Mégále Idéa*), 5, 6, 128.
 Greco-Turkish Treaty, 36.
 Grey, Sir Edward, 60, 110, 112, 144,
 146, 150.
 Gryparis, 77.
 Gueshov, 97-100, 103, 118.
 Guillaumat, General, 184-5.
- H**adjianestes, General, 219, 225-6.
 Hadjikyriakos, Admiral, 236, 240.
 Harrington, General, 222.
 Hatti-Humayun, 15.
 Henderson, Arthur, 252.
 Herriot, E., 273.
 Hitler, A., 285, 288, 291.
 Huxley, Aldous, 3.
- I.M.R.O.**, 95.
 Ismail Kemal Bey, 110.
 Ismet Pasha, 222, 224, 227-9, 248.
 Isvolski, Alexander, 134.
- J**iannaris, 131.
 Jonescu, 101, 204.
- K**aizer, 90, 135, 141, 154.
 Kamil Pasha, 110.
 Kammenos, General, 268.
 Kara, Theodore Pasha, 22-3.
 Karapanos, 138.
 Karathanas, 264-5.
 Kemal, Mustapha, 157, 197-8, 201,
 207, 209, 216, 220, 224.
 Kerensky, 190.
 Kerr, Admiral, 80, 144, 146.
 Kerr, Philip, 207.
 Khedive Ismail, 11.
- Koumises, General, 256, 270.
 Kolliaxes, Vice-Admiral, 268.
 Kondyles, General, 240-1, 254,
 266-7, 269-271, 276, 278
 Kontaratos, 64.
 Koryzes, 291, 293.
 Koundouros, 23.
 Krassas, 9-10.
 Kyriakoula, Mme., 132.
 Kyrou, L. A., 250.
- L**ambros, Professor, S., 173.
 Liberal Party, 79, 92, 160, 167, 178,
 181, 261.
 Lloyd George, D., 152, 183-4, 187,
 194-5, 198, 208-9, 218-9, 223,
 252, 260.
 Logothetopoulos, 295.
 Ludwig, Emil, 258.
- M**achiavelli, 101.
 Mahon, Sir Bryan, 165.
 Mandakas, General Manoles, 295.
 Maneses, Abbot, 11.
 Marinovich, Dr., 245.
 Maris, 73.
 Markantonaki, 131.
 Mavromichales, 65, 77-8, 265, 271.
 Maximos, 273.
 Mazzini, 113.
 Metaxakes, Meletios, 218.
 Metaxas, Colonel, 147, 153, 233.
 General, 241, 254-6, 264-5,
 272, 279-286, 289, 291.
 Metternich, 19.
 Michalakopoulos, 241.
 Military League, 62-5, 72, 75-6, 78,
 235.
 Milne, General, 185.
 Milovanovich, 99.
 Mohammed Ali, 19.
 Montagna, 228.
 Montenegro, King of, 98.
 Moscow-Ankara Agreement, 214.
 Mourines, 7.
 Mussolini, B., 231, 232, 285-9, 291.
 Mustapha Pasha, 11.
- N**azim Pasha, 110.
 Nechudov, 121.
 Nicolas, Prince, 47, 257.

- Nider, General, 184.
Nour Bey, Dr., 227, 229.
- E**cumenical Patriarch, 80, 241.
Orlando, 190.
Othonaos, General, 255.
- P**act of Halepa, 14–16, 22, 35.
Painlevé, 183.
Pallis, Major General, 214.
Panagiotakos, General, 268.
Panas, 99.
Pangalos, General, 236, 240–1, 243, 248.
Papagos, General, 291.
Papanastassiou, 236–7, 240–1, 254
Papoulas, General, 214, 218, 256, 270.
Paraskevopoulos, General, 192, 200.
Pashich, 141.
Paul, Prince, 203.
Paul, Prince of Yugoslavia, 291.
Peisistratus, 88.
Pellé, General, 228.
Pericles, 88.
Phanariotes, 88.
Phocas, Captain, 220.
Plasteras, Colonel, 220, 230, 235.
General, 255–6, 265, 270.
Poincaré, 158, 218–9, 222, 228, 232.
Politis, 177.
Polychroniades, 247.
Polychronopoulos, 263–4.
Prodopadakes, 226.
- R**atib Pasha, 21.
Reganakos, 264.
Regnault, General, 177.
Renieris, 18.
Repoules, 183, 192, 194, 202.
Rhalles, J., 61, 72, 77–8, 82, 154, 206, 208, 265.
Rizov, 99.
Rodeslavov, 126.
Roufos, Lucas, 131.
Rumbold, Sir Horace, 228.
- S**akkaria River, 215, 225.
Sandansky, 109.
Sanders, Liman von, 152, 224.
Sarivianes, Colonel, 214.
- Sarrail, General, 165, 168, 172–3, 185.
Sasonov, 156.
Savov, General, 107, 122.
Savvides, Dr. Antonios P., 83.
Schacht, Dr., 281.
Schanzer, 219.
Schenk, Baron von, 158, 161.
Schilzzi, Helena, 216.
Schinas, 117.
Sclavainas, 272.
Sfakianakes, 35–6.
Shaw, George Bernard, 258.
Skoulas, 45.
Skouloudes, 167–8, 178.
Skra-di-Legen, 184.
Sonino, Baron, 158.
Sophocles, 74.
Sophoules, 241, 272, 279–80.
Stefanou, Dionysios, 86.
Sterghiates, 192, 197.
Stoyadinovich, 285.
Strategos, 226.
Stratos, 126, 226.
Streit, G., 145–7.
Suleiman, 262.
- I**alaat, 186.
Tellini, General, 230.
Tewfik Rushdi Bey, 247.
Theodorov, General, 109.
Theotokes, N., 47, 61, 65, 72, 78, 82, 122, 154, 214, 226, 284.
Tittoni, 136.
Titulescu, 273.
Todorov, General, 185.
Toynbee, Professor A. J., 194, 196.
Treaty of Berlin, 13, 22, 59, 70, 104.
Bucharest, 124–5, 141.
Lausanne, 5, 223–4, 229.
London, 158.
Neuilly, 197.
Ouchy, 110.
San Stephano, 12, 101.
Sèvres, 5, 200–1, 210, 213.
Treaty—Greco-Bulgarian, 102.
—Serbo-Bulgarian, 102.
Tricoupes, Charilaos, 22, 274.
Tsaldares, 241, 244, 254–5, 265–7, 269–70, 279–80.
Tsaldares, Madame, 265.
Tsangarides, General, 284.

Tserepes, 201
 Tsolakoglu, General, 294.
 Tsouderos, E., 240, 293.
 Turko-Bulgarian Railway Agreement, 160.

Vallaoritis, 92.
 Veloni, Mme., 132.
 Venizelos, Eleutherios—
 Birth, 7.
 Baptism, 9.
 Student, 9.
 Marriage, 10.
 Interview with Joseph Chamberlain, 14–18.
 Elected for Province of Kydonia, 19.
 Birth of son; death of wife, 23.
 Interview with M. Caclamanos, 26.
 Declares a revolution, 27.
 Elected President of Revolutionary Assembly, 33.
 Elected to committee to draft Constitution for Crete, 39.
 Sent to prison, 44.
 Again leads an armed revolt, 48.
 Prime Minister of Crete, 55.
 Declares Union with Greece, 58.
 Invited to Athens by Military League, 64.
 Elected to Greek Parliament, 72.
 Resigns from Cretan Parliament, 73.
 Prime Minister of Greece, 76.
 Makes move for Balkan Alliance, 97.
 Balkan Alliance a reality, 102.
 Represents Greece after defeat of Turkey, 111.
 Sees Greek Flag installed in Crete, 131.
 Is pro-Ally, 144.
 Proclaims revolutionary movement for intervention, 171.
 Excommunicated, 175.
 Minister of War, 177.
 At Peace Conference in Paris, 187.
 Treaty of Sèvres signed, 201.
 Nearly assassinated, 201.
 In exile, 207.
 Second marriage, 217.
 In charge of Greece's foreign policy, 221.

Venizelos, Eleutherios—*continued*—
 Signs Treaty of Lausanne, 223.
 Refuses to return to Greece, 230.
 Persuaded to return, 235.
 Prime Minister again, 236.
 Resigns owing to ill-health, 237.
 Leaves Greece, 238.
 Again Premier of Greece, 242.
 Signs Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Turkey, 248.
 Resigns office—resumes it, 254.
 Brief characterisation, 257–62.
 Nearly assassinated again, 263.
 Retires to Crete, 268.
 Assumes leadership of rebellion, 268.
 Goes to Paris, 269.
 Sentenced to death in his absence, 270.
 Dies in Paris, 274.
 Buried in Crete, 274.
 Venizelos, Hadji Nicolas, 7.
 Kyriakos (father), 8.
 Kyriakos (son), 23, 133.
 Madame, 240, 242.
 Venteres, G., 203.
 Verovits, George, 25.
 Vlachos, 248, 291.
 Volanies, 270.
 Votsis, Nicolaos, 108.
 Vozikes, 280.

Wavell, General A., 290.
 Wilson, President, 190.
 Wilson, Sir Henry, 200.

Xenophon, 262

Young Turks, 56, 58–9, 94, 96, 104, 110, 148
 Yovanovich, 228.

Zaimes, 54–5, 58, 165, 167–8, 173, 176–7, 233, 241–2.
 Zographos, 138, 157.
 Zonnart, 133–4, 176.
 Zorbas, General, 80.
 Zormpas, Colonel, 65–6.
 Zygomalas, M. G., 9.
 Zymbrakakes, Colonel, 170.

